ASIAN RACING FEDERATION

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 5 | NOVEMBER 2026



MESSAGE FROM ARF CHAIR

KEY G1 RACES

MEMBER UPDATES

MEMBER PROFILE

ARF NEWS

FEATURED RESOURCES

Photo from Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club



MESSAGE FROM ARF CHAIR

WINFRIED ENGELBRECHT-BRESGES

I am pleased to share the fifth issue of the *ARF Newsletter*, featuring developments from across the ARF membership; a profile of the National Association of Racing, Japan; and updates from the ARF Executive Council and committees. It reflects the breadth of activity taking place across the ARF region and the ongoing engagement between racing authorities on matters of common interest.

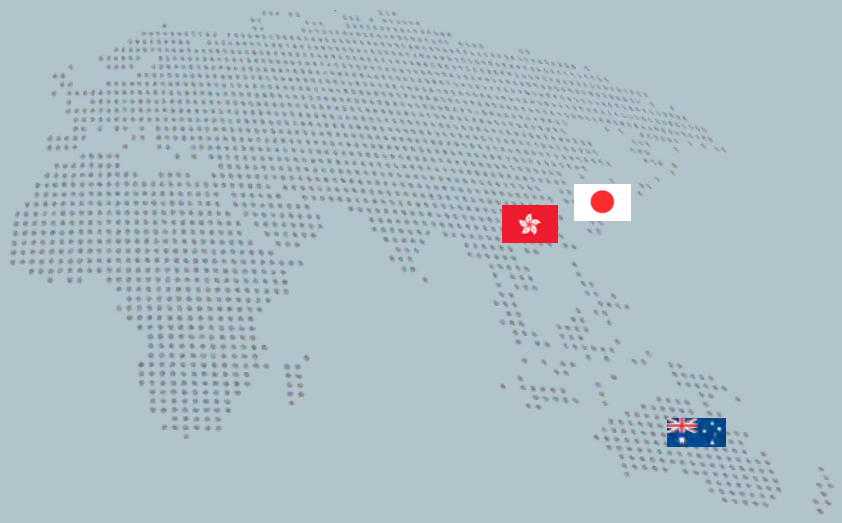
This issue also highlights presentation materials and video replays from the 41st Asian Racing Conference (ARC) held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in February, the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities' inaugural Climate Change and Sustainability Summit held in Porto, Portugal in July and the 60th International Conference of Horseracing Authorities held in Paris in October. These resources provide members and stakeholders with an opportunity to access the discussions, insights and practical examples shared during the events.

Looking ahead, preparations are underway for the 42nd ARC, which will be held in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2028. We look forward to sharing further details with you in due course.

I would like to thank our members and committee representatives for their continued support and contributions to this publication. I hope you find this issue of the *ARF Newsletter* informative and of interest.

SELECT GROUP 1 RACES AT A GLANCE

(April to October 2026)



REGION	DATE	RACE	WINNING HORSE
Australia	4 Apr 2026	Asahi Super Dry T J Smith Stakes	Joliestar
Japan	5 Apr 2026	Osaka Hai	Croix du Nord
Australia	11 Apr 2026	Queen Elizabeth Stakes	Sir Delius
Australia	18 Apr 2026	Schweppes All Aged Stakes	Beiwacht
Japan	19 Apr 2026	Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas)	Lovcen
Hong Kong	26 Apr 2026	FWD Queen Elizabeth II Cup	Romantic Warrior
Hong Kong	26 Apr 2026	FWD Champions Mile	My Wish
Hong Kong	26 Apr 2026	Chairman's Sprint Prize	Ka Ying Rising
Japan	3 May 2026	Tenno Sho (Spring)	Croix du Nord
Hong Kong	24 May 2026	Standard Chartered Champions & Chater Cup	Romantic Warrior
Japan	31 May 2026	Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby)	Lovcen
Japan	7 Jun 2026	Yasuda Kinen	Sixpence
Japan	14 Jun 2026	Takarazuka Kinen	Meisho Tabaru
Australia	22 Aug 2026	Winx Stakes	Autumn Glow
Australia	29 Aug 2026	Stow Storage Caulfield Memsie Stakes	Beiwacht
Australia	12 Sep 2026	Crown Makybe Diva Stakes	Sheza Alibi
Australia	27 Sep 2026	Ladbrokes Manikato Stakes	Jimmysstar
Japan	27 Sep 2026	Sprinters Stakes	Puro Magic
Australia	3 Oct 2026	TAB Turnbull Stakes	Cosmic Crusader
Australia	17 Oct 2026	TAB Everest Stakes	Tempted
Australia	17 Oct 2026	King Charles III Stakes	Autumn Glow
Australia	24 Oct 2026	Ladbrokes Cox Plate	Cosmic Crusader

** Based on the 2025 LONGINES World's Top 100 Group 1 Races*

AUSTRALIA

Racing Australia (RA) has published its Fact Book 2025, which brings together key results and statistics for the Australian thoroughbred sector for the racing season ended 31 July 2025.

Published annually by RA, the Fact Book has established itself as a useful and reliable source of the broadest range of information relating to Australian thoroughbred racing and breeding.

The 2025 edition features data relating to areas including, amongst others, key industry statistics and trends, wagering, prizemoney, Australian races, Group 1 winners, top prizemoney earners, leading trainers and jockeys, course records, breeding, ownership, export and import, sales and classifications.

Read more here.



Photo from Racing Australia

HONG KONG

The 2026/27 Hong Kong racing season opened at Sha Tin Racecourse on 6 September, with the newly upgraded G3 HKSAR Chief Executive's Cup Handicap serving as the feature race and offering increased prize money of HKD 4.2 million (USD 547,930).

The race was headlined by the return of Ka Ying Rising, who set his fifth Sha Tin 1,200-metre course record and extended his winning streak to a Hong Kong record 21 consecutive victories. The performance elevated Ka Ying Rising to a rating of 135 and outright first place in the LONGINES World's Best Racehorse Rankings, becoming the highest-rated sprinter in the history of the rankings.



Photo from HKJC

This season, a Premier Series has been introduced under which eligible horses can earn additional bonuses for winning or placing in selected races. Prize money has increased by HKD 1 million (USD 127,430) each for the Hong Kong Classic Mile and Hong Kong Classic Cup, and by HKD 2 million (USD 254,860) for the 150th Hong Kong Derby. Additionally, simulcasting has been expanded to 70 simulcast days and 55 simulcast races, enabling the Club to cover most of the IFHA World's Top 100 Group/ Grade 1 races.

Read more here, here and here.

JAPAN (JRA)

The Japan Racing Association (JRA) has seen a number of notable developments over the past year. Forever Young achieved major international successes, including back-to-back victory in the Saudi Cup in 2026 and winning the G1 Breeders' Cup Classic in 2025. He also made history as the first dirt horse to be named JRA Horse of the Year in 2025. Additionally, T O Elvis' victory in the Breeders' Cup Sprint in 2026 marks the first Japan-trained horse to win the event.

The Japan Cup was won by an overseas-trained horse, Calandagan, for the first time in 20 years. It was also named the Longines World's Best Race together with the Champion Stakes in the UK.

JRA also announced a significant overhaul to its bonus and expense-support system for international races in Japan. Bonuses were expanded to all G1 races for older horses, with the Japan Cup bonus increased to USD 5 million, bringing the total winner's prize to a world-leading USD 8.2 million for a turf race. Eligibility was expanded to include qualifying performances from both the current and previous year, and Tier 1 bonus eligibility extended to 2nd and 3rd place finishers of those qualifying races.



Photo from JRA

Read more here, here and here, and check out the Japan Cup trailer and video featuring Calandagan's Road to the Japan Cup in 2025.

JAPAN (NAR)

The National Association of Racing (NAR) has published a promotional video featuring two of its international races: the G1 Tokyo Daishoten and the Listed Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun.

In recent years, Forever Young has achieved outstanding success in these two races, as well as in other in major NAR races. His victories have included, amongst others, the JBC Nisai Yushun (D1800m, Mombetsu) and Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun (D1600m, Kawasaki) in 2023; the Japan Dirt Classic (D2000m, Oi) and Tokyo Daishoten (2000m, Oi) in 2024; as well as the Nippon TV Hai (D1800m, Funabashi) in 2025.



Photo from NAR

Additionally, several other Japanese horses have suceeded in major NAR races and overseas, further highlighting Japan's growing presence in dirt racing. Notable names include NAR-affiliated Diktaean, the 2025 NAR Horse of the Year and winner of the Tokyo Daishoten and G3 Korea Cup in Seoul in 2025; and JRA-affiliated horses Mikki Fight, winner of the 2025 JBC Classic at Funabashi and 2026 Teio Sho at Oi, and Finger, winner of the 2026 Tokyo Derby at Oi.

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

The 2026 Bahrain International Trophy was upgraded to Group 1 status, with prize money increased to USD 1.5 million. The race, the most valuable in Bahrain, will be the first Group 1 race in the country.

Bahrain Turf Club Chairman HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa said: *"This is a proud moment for The Kingdom of Bahrain. When we established the Bahrain International Trophy in 2019 it was always our ambition and belief that the race would grow to become our first Group 1 race. To have achieved that after only seven years is fantastic. Bahrain's vision for horseracing is rooted in international collaboration, long-term development and a clear ambition to continue elevating the country's status within the global racing landscape."*

CEO Yusuf Buheji added: *"The Bahrain International Trophy is our flagship race and its promotion to Group 1 status represents a significant step in the development of horseracing in Bahrain. As well as the Bahrain International Trophy, the rest of our programme of premier races continues to grow, further increasing opportunities for international horses to compete throughout the season."*



Photo from Bahrain Turf Club

Additionally, the new Bahrain Long Distance Cup (2800m), a USD 400,000 open handicap for three-year-olds and above, will be run on Bahrain International Trophy Day (13 November), and the Bahrain Turf Series (December to March) was expanded to include a new Mile Division. The Series now comprises 14 races, forming part of the international racing season alongside six internationally recognised Listed and Group races.

Read more here and here.

KOREA



Photo from Seoul Economic Daily

The Korea Racing Authority (KRA) held an inauguration ceremony for Mr Hee-Jong WOO, DVM, PhD, its 39th President and CEO, at its Gwacheon headquarters in Gyeonggi Province on 26 February.

Mr Woo, who served as professor and dean at Seoul National University's College of Veterinary Medicine, emphasised KRA's role and public value in his inaugural address, outlining the direction and responsibilities for a new leap forward.

He assessed that KRA has been the central pillar of Korea's horse industry development over the past century, playing important roles for the nation and society in various aspects, including tax revenue contributions, fostering the horse industry and spreading equestrian culture, and creating jobs while enhancing industrial value-added. He expressed his commitment to pursuing cycle growth between horse racing and equestrian sports, improving public perception and easing excessive government regulations, and expanding communication with stakeholders. He presented a vision that KRA must take another leap forward as a public corporation that contributes to citizens and society.

Read more here.

MAURITIUS

The MTC Jockey Club (MTCJC) announced a 30% increase in prize money for the 2026 racing season, supporting owners and trainers and strengthening pari-mutuel betting opportunities. The increase follows a mid-season boost in 2025, amounting to roughly 50% growth in total prize money over two seasons. The stakes increase, which also includes a 10% retroactive bonus on 2025 earnings aimed at supporting owners and trainers, is expected to strengthen pari-mutuel betting pools.



Photo from Focus Gaming News Africa

The MTCJC also highlighted ongoing plans for international commingling of betting pools.

"These measures reflect our commitment to maintaining a vibrant and sustainable racing industry, which directly benefits betting operators and punters alike," said the MTCJC.

Read more here.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (NZTR) has released the industry-funded 1% Thoroughbred Welfare Levy end of season report that provides an update on activity and expenditure during Q4 and brings together the investment and outcomes delivered across the full 2025/26 year.

Across the 2025/26 season, NZD 1.095 million (USD 616,970) was invested through the Welfare Levy in racing safety and research, retraining and rehoming, initiatives promoting Thoroughbred versatility, direct welfare support, education and traceability.

The year also marked an important step forward for NZTR's approach to welfare, with the launch of the 2026 – 2030 Thoroughbred Welfare Strategy, Together for the Thoroughbred, establishing a clear, evidence-based framework to guide the care and wellbeing of Thoroughbreds throughout every stage of their lives.


Photo from NZTR // Nicole Troost

Grounded in the New Zealand-developed Five Domains Model, the strategy adopts a contemporary scientific approach to equine welfare by recognising that a horse's wellbeing extends beyond physical health to include nutrition, environment, behaviour and mental state. A key focus of the strategy is improving lifetime traceability, with enhanced systems to follow Thoroughbreds from birth through racing and into retirement.

The strategy also outlines a comprehensive programme of work to improve raceday and training safety, strengthen retraining and rehoming pathways, promote responsible breeding and ownership, and increase education, research and industry engagement. Together, these initiatives position welfare as a shared responsibility and reinforce New Zealand's commitment to internationally recognised best practice.

Read more here and here.

OMAN

The Oman Horse Racing Club 2026/27 equestrian programme commenced on 17 October 2026 and will run to 17 April 2027. The programme comprises several key races and events, including the National Day race, the Omani Derby Cup and the annual Royal Cavalry race. The opening meeting was held at Al Rahba Racecourse, with eight races featuring Arabian and Thoroughbred horses.



Photo from Oman News Agency

This season follows the 2025/26 season which saw a record number of horses participating in 203 races and concluded on 18 April. 159 races were allocated to Purebred Arabian horses, including 40 races for Oman breds in support of domestic breeders, alongside 44 races for Thoroughbreds.

Races were held at two venues: Al Rahba Racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka and Al Wattayah Racecourse in the Wilayat of Muttrah, reflecting efforts to diversify locations and broaden the sport's reach across governorates.

The highlight of the 2025/26 season was the victory of FALAAH (FR) in the Kahayla Classic (G1-Purebred Arabian) held on Dubai World Cup night. This marked the first victory in this race for an Omani trained horse.

Read more here and here.

QATAR

The Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club (QREC) opened its new racing season with an eight-race card at Al Rayyan Racecourse on 14 October. The meeting was highlighted by the Al Ghariyah Cup, the season's first trophy race, which saw September Leaves produce a determined late surge to land the feature contest.

During the 2026-2027 season, a comprehensive 70-fixture schedule will run across the Al Rayyan and Al Uqda racecourses, featuring major support from local owners, trainers and jockeys. The season will draw to a close on 15 April.

The HH The Amir Sword Festival will take place at Al Rayyan Racecourse from 10 to 13 February 2027, with the recently promoted international Group 1 HH The Amir Trophy scheduled on 13 February 2027.



Photo from QREC

The upcoming festival will also feature upgrades in status for several other races. The Irish Thoroughbred Marketing Cup has been promoted to Group 3 level from Listed status while both the Dukhan Sprint Cup and the Al Rayyan Mile have been elevated to Listed status.

Read more here and here.

SAUDI ARABIA

The 2026-27 racing season has begun at King Abdulaziz Racecourse in Riyadh. Running until 17 April 2027, it includes The Saudi Cup meeting on 5 and 6 February.

The Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia (JCSA) has announced a number of new innovations, highlighted by the introduction of a colts and fillies series, and enhancements including a boost in prize money to the G3 Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Cup and the Listed Crown Prince Cup. Additionally, the 1600m Saudi Derby, held on Saudi Cup day, has been promoted from Group 3 to Group 2, with a USD 500,000 prize money boost bringing its total purse to USD 2 million.



2026 Saudi Derby winner Al Haram (IRE) ridden by Ricardo Ferreira
Photo from JCSA / Neville Hopwood

Highlights of the 10-week summer season at King Khalid Racecourse in Taif included the SAR 450,000 (USD 119,660) National Day Cup on 26 September and the newly-upgraded Group 3 Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Cup for Purebred Arabians the day before, staged alongside various divisions of the Taif Cup. Other notable meetings were the Sprint Championships on 18 September and the Taif Derby and Arabian Derby on 22 August.

The JCSA has also adopted a new mechanism for calculating points in the Owners, Trainers, Jockeys and Horses Championship which will be determined through a calculation system based on the classification of races and the quality of performance, with higher points awarded to winning owners in high-ranking and major races.

Read more here, here and here.

TÜRKİYE

The 100th edition of the Gazi Derby, Türkiye's most prestigious thoroughbred competition and a sporting tradition dedicated to the founder of the republic, Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was held at Veliefendi Racecourse in Istanbul on 28 June, marking a historic milestone for Turkish horse racing.



Photo from Jockey Club of Türkiye

The race saw 22 three-year-old purebred English horses competing on a 2,400m grass track—a race that each horse can enter only once during its career. It featured record-breaking prize money, with the winner receiving TRY 50 million (USD 1 million), and the second, third, fourth and fifth place finishers receiving TRY 20 million (USD 428,792), TRY 10 million (USD 214,396), TRY 5 million (USD 107,198) and TRY 2.5 million (USD 53,599), respectively. Additionally, TRY 50 million (USD 1 million) was distributed as bonus prize money.

The centennial celebration also featured an aerial display during the Gazi Gala Dinner at Ciragan Palace on the Bosphorus on 26 June, with a fleet of 2,026 drones forming iconic images including Atatürk's silhouette and the Turkish flag in one of the country's largest drone performances to date.

Read more here.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The Emirates Racing Authority (ERA) has announced the official schedule for the 2026–2027 UAE horse racing season, which commenced on 22 October 2026 at Abu Dhabi Turf Club.



Photo from ERA

The season features a programme of races for both Purebred Arabian and Thoroughbred horses, with 64 race meetings across five racecourses throughout the UAE. Racing will take place at Meydan Racecourse (17 race meetings), Abu Dhabi Turf Club (16 race meetings), Al Ain Racecourse (14 race meetings), Jebel Ali Racecourse (11 race meetings) and Sharjah Racecourse (6 race meetings).

Meydan Racecourse remains the flagship venue of UAE racing and will conclude the season with the USD 12 million Dubai World Cup on 27 March 2027.

Abu Dhabi Turf Club will host the AED 8 million (USD 2.17 million) UAE President Cup on 12 December 2026, one of the world's most significant races for Purebred Arabians, and the USD 1 million Abu Dhabi Gold Cup on 7 February 2027.

Sharjah Racecourse will feature the HH The Ruler of Sharjah Cup, the GCC Cup, the HH Sharjah Crown Prince Cup and the HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Cup, the opening leg of the Emirates Sprint Series.

Al Ain Racecourse will host the three-leg Marathon Series alongside the Al Ain Mile meeting, while Jebel Ali Racecourse will feature the Jebel Ali Mile, Jebel Ali Sprint and Jebel Ali Stakes.

Read more here.

PLEASE SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US

The ARF Newsletter is distributed to ARF Members and key stakeholders around the world.



Future issues of the ARF Newsletter will continue to highlight racing developments across the ARF footprint. We would be delighted to share and celebrate any recent milestones such as key races, major developments and achievements in ARF Member jurisdictions.

We invite you to get in touch with the ARF Secretariat with any relevant news, updates and photos that you would like us to consider including in upcoming ARF Newsletters. The ARF Secretariat would be happy to assist with the copywriting of news selected for inclusion in the ARF Newsletter.

For any inquiries, or to share news from your jurisdiction, please contact the ARF Secretariat at secretariat@asianracing.org or fill out our online contact form here.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RACING, JAPAN

The ARF has published the fourth issue of the *Member Profile,* showcasing the **National Association of Racing, Japan (NAR)** and its key milestones, races and initiatives.



We, the National Association of Racing (NAR), are a governing body established under the Horse Racing Act which serves as the central coordinating authority for racing by local governments.

As a public corporation, our mission is to promote the fair, impartial and smooth operation of racing by local governments, while also contributing to the improvement and breeding of horses and the advancement of livestock industries.

To enhance the overall quality of dirt racing, including racing by local governments, we reorganised our race series in 2024, establishing a structured system for dirt races and inaugurating the 3YO Dirt Triple Crown. Top horses from various local jurisdictions have since gathered to compete in these highly competitive races.

We aim to clearly define dirt racing by local governments and provide a platform where highly capable horses can perform according to their aptitude, delivering attractive and high quality races.

Mr Hiroshi Saito, NAR President & CEO

READ THE FULL MESSAGE



KEY MILESTONES

1946 marked the promulgation and enactment of law concerning racing by local governments.

READ MORE



OPERATING FRAMEWORK

There are two types of horse racing in Japan: racing by local governments at the prefectural or municipal level, or partial cooperatives formed by municipalities; and racing conducted by the Japan Racing Association (JRA).

DISCOVER MORE



KEY INTERNATIONAL RACES

The Tokyo Daishoten is the only internationally-recognised Grade 1 race on the NAR circuit and brings together both JRA and NAR runners.

FIND OUT MORE



SERIES RACES

Grandame-Japan: These principal races are designed to expand the stage for outstanding fillies and mares, and to promote exchange while enhancing the appeal of mares-only racing.

LEARN MORE



EDUCATION & TRAINING

NAR operates the Racing Education Centre in Nasushiobara City, Tochigi Prefecture, which provides education and training for jockeys and trainers seeking careers in racing by local governments.

DISCOVER MORE

ARF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The ARF Executive Council has re-elected **Mr Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges**, CEO of The Hong Kong Jockey Club, as Chair; and **Mr Masayuki Goto**, Executive Advisor of the Japan Racing Association, and **H.E. Mohammad Saeed Al Shehhi**, General Manager and Board Member of the Emirates Racing Authority, as Vice-Chairs, at its meeting on 9 February at the 41st Asian Racing Conference (ARC) in Riyadh. These appointments run until the conclusion of the 42nd ARC in 2028.

As well, **Dr Ram H Shroff**, Chairman of Stewards of The Royal Western India Turf Club, was appointed as the representative of the Turf Authorities of India in February 2026.



Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges
ARF Chair



Masayuki Goto
ARF Vice-Chair



H.E. Mohammad Saeed Al Shehhi
ARF Vice-Chair



Dr Ram H Shroff

Find out more about the ARF Executive Council members here.

ARF GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The ARF General Assembly, which took place at the 41st Asian Racing Conference (ARC) in Riyadh on 9 February 2026, was attended by over 70 delegates from 26 members.

Participants received an overview of the ARF's ongoing pursuit of its strategic objectives and an update on the ARF's activities since the last General Assembly on 27 August 2024, and discussed topics relevant to the ARF.



ARF DRUG CONTROL COMMITTEE

APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIR



Dr Terence Wan, Consultant at The Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC), has been appointed as **Chair** of the ARF Drug Control Committee (DCC). He has worked for five decades in established laboratories in the USA, UK, Switzerland and Hong Kong, including as the HKJC's Head of Racing Laboratory for 20 years and Chief Advisor, Doping Control for six years.

He currently also serves as Chair of the Advisory Council on Equine Prohibited Substances and Practices of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA); Chair of the Reference Laboratory Technical Committee of the IFHA; Convenor of the Racehorse Testing Working Group of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation; and Member of the Gene Doping Expert Committee of the International Horse Sports Confederation.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

Additionally, **Dr David Craig**, Head of Equine Health and Welfare at the Emirates Racing Authority and **Mr James Ogilvy**, ARF Director, have been appointed as the **Vice-Chair** and **Secretary** of the ARF DCC respectively.

Other members of the ARFDCC include:

- **Racing Australia:** Dr Adam Cawley, Dr Carly Garling
- **HKJC:** Dr Emmie Ho, Dr Kieran Finn
- **Japan Racing Association:** Mr Gary Leung, Dr Taisuke Kuroda
- **National Horseracing Authority of Southern Africa:** Dr Schalk de Kock, Dr Matthew Bawden

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Based on recent research, the DCC recommended the adoption of a new Asian Screening Limit (ASL) for controlling flunixin, a common non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, in equine plasma. This was approved by the ARF Executive Council on 30 May 2026 and the DCC is currently in discussions with other regions with regard to the possibility of this new ASL being adopted as an International Screening Limit (ISL).

The DCC is also in discussion with the European Horserace Scientific Liaison Committee on the possibility of adopting the following ISLs: dexamethasone in plasma, procaine penicillin in urine and ketoprofen in plasma.

In addition, a proposal initiated by Hong Kong to review the current international threshold for controlling salicylic acid in plasma was supported by the DCC, and population studies of salicylic acid levels in horses after alfalfa hay consumption will be conducted by several DCC member authorities as well as those in other regions.

ASIAN PATTERN COMMITTEE

The Asian Pattern Committee (APC) aims to assist in the coordination of programming high quality races within ARF member jurisdictions by ensuring that quality control measures are in place for Group and Listed races, both domestic and international, within the Asian Pattern.

APC UPDATES

Rob Rorrison, Chairman of Racing Australia, replaced Jason Scott as the Australian representative on the APC in June 2025.

A number of Group 1 races in South Africa and New Zealand were considered by the APC at its meeting in September 2025, resulting in four downgrades.

Following a resolution by the ARF Executive Council, the APC conducted a comprehensive review of black type races in Australia, resulting in a number of upgrades, additions and downgrades for the 2026/27 season.

Over the past twelve months the APC has approved a number of upgrades from developing racing nations in the Gulf region. In Saudi Arabia the Neom Turf Cup (previously a Group 2) was run for the first time as a Group 1 on Saudi Cup night in 2026. On the corresponding fixture in 2027, the Saudi Derby, formerly a Group 3, has been approved for upgrade to Group 2.

Qatar's principal race, the HH Amir Trophy, was run at Group 2 level for the first time in February 2026 and attracted a strong field, with the Japanese-trained Deep Monster defeating previous Group 1 winners Goliath and Giavellotto. The race was subsequently approved for upgrade to Group 1 status in the 2026/27 season.

The APC also endorsed an upgrade for Bahrain's flagship race, the Bahrain International Trophy, to Group 1 status in 2026/27. Both the HH The Amir Trophy and Bahrain International Trophy will be the first International Group 1 races staged in their respective countries.

Elsewhere, the KZN Guineas in South Africa was approved for promotion to Grade 1 status in 2026/27 having performed strongly in recent seasons, whilst the Korea Cup, one of two International Group races staged at Seoul each September, was run for the first time at Group 2 level recently.

LONGINES WORLD'S BEST RACEHORSE RANKINGS

The APC nominates three members – including one of the co-chairman – of the World's Best Racehorse Rankings Executive Committee (WBRREC), which produces the annual Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings. Nigel Gray stepped down from his role as ARF appointed co-Chairman in January and was replaced by Greg Carpenter, Head of Racing Product at The Hong Kong Jockey Club and Hong Kong's representative on the APC.



The 2026 Longines World Racing Awards ceremony will be held in January 2027. During the ceremony, the highest-rated horse in the Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings and the 2026 Longines World's Best Horse Race (awarded to the Japan Cup and British Champion Stakes in 2025) will be revealed and celebrated. The Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings are established by international handicappers according to the performance of the horses in top races. The highest rated race is determined by averaging the rankings of the first four placed horses.

Following the ceremony, the IFHA's annual list of the Top 100 Group/Grade 1 races will be released, as well as the rankings for all horses around the world rated 115 or higher.

41ST ASIAN RACING CONFERENCE

The 41st Asian Racing Conference (ARC) was staged in Riyadh from 9 to 14 February, marking an historic milestone as the conference convened in Saudi Arabia for the very first time. Over 600 delegates from around 40 countries attended the event.



Themed *Honouring Tradition, Shaping the Future*, the three-day Business Programme featured 45 speakers from around the world across nine plenary sessions on discuss topics dedicated to the sustainable and collective advancement of racing and breeding, with a focus on strengthening the sustainability of the industry. Additionally, there was a session curated by the conference host, the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia, which focused on Saudi Vision 2030.

As well, a number of key bureau meetings were held during the conference, including the ARF Executive Council, ARF General Assembly, Asian Pattern Committee, IFHA Harmonisation of Racing Rules Committee, International Stewards' Conference, Asian-Oceania Stud Book Committee and International Group of Specialist Racing Veterinarians.

Additionally, the International Forum for the Aftercare of Racehorses (IFAR) held its 10th annual conference on 9 February in conjunction with the 41st ARC. The event featured a tour of the JCSA's Retraining & Riding Academy, followed by a lineup of international speakers addressing a wide range of topics relating to the aftercare of racehorses. IFAR has a long history of collaboration with the ARF and this is the fifth time it was held in conjunction with the ARC.

The 41st ARC concluded on 12 February with a Closing Ceremony which featured the official handover of the ARC flag to New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing, who will host the 42nd ARC in Auckland in 2028.



41st ARC presentations and video replays are available on the ARF website here.

IFHA CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT



Speaker presentations and video replays from the inaugural International Federation of Horseracing Authorities' (IFHA) Climate Change and Sustainability Summit are now available here.

Held in Porto, Portugal from 13 to 14 July in conjunction with the European and Mediterranean Horseracing Federation's General Assembly, the Summit brought together around 50 global racing leaders and administrators and sustainability experts from around the world to discuss climate and sustainability-related challenges and opportunities facing the racing industry.

The programme featured a leadership panel and four dedicated sessions exploring the impact of extreme weather events on racing operations; the impact of climate change and environmental issues on horses; how major racing and sporting venues have incorporated environmental sustainability initiatives; and the importance of communicating sustainability authentically amidst heightened societal expectations.

Participants also took part in an Industry Collaboration Workshop moderated by World Business Council for Sustainable Development, which focused on shared understanding and practical action across the industry.

ARF members and stakeholders are encouraged to access the presentation materials and session recordings, which capture insights and practical examples shared by experts from the racing, sporting and sustainability sectors.

60TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF HORSERACING AUTHORITIES



Photo from Scoop Dyga/ IFHA

The 60th International Conference of Horseracing Authorities, organised by the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA), took place in Paris, France on 5 October and brought together more than 150 delegates from around 40 countries. Marking its 60th anniversary, this milestone Conference reflected on the Federation's major achievements over six decades while examining opportunities and challenges for the future of racing worldwide.

The keynote address was delivered by Princess Zahra Aga Khan, whose Daryz was a repeat winner of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (G1) the previous day.

This was followed by two sessions which explored the origins and evolution of the IFHA over the past 60 years, and focused on leading racing toward a strong and sustainable future.

The Conference concluded with a tribute to the late Louis Romanet, Chairman Emeritus of the IFHA, who passed away in March.

Presentations and video replays from the Conference have been published here.

ASIAN
RACING
FEDERATION

ASIAN RACING FEDERATION

1 Sports Road
Happy Valley
Hong Kong SAR China

secretariat@asianracing.org

https://www.asianracing.org/