

NAR Racing

The biggest difference between racing conducted by the JRA and Racing by Local Governments is that JRA returns a percentage of its revenue to the national treasury, whereas Racing by Local Governments contributes to the finances of the individual local government. Also, the majority of race meetings by local governments is conducted on weekdays during the day. The National Association for Racing (NAR) oversees the 15 racing organizers throughout the country.

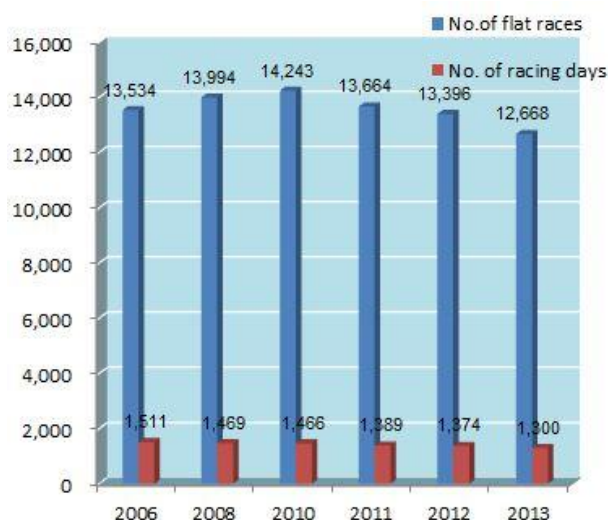
Races

All races held by NAR are flat races on dirt surface, with the exception of Ban-ei (Draft Horse Racing) at Obihiro Racecourse and turf races held at Morioka Racecourse – the only racecourse in local government racing with a turf surface.

In 2013, there were a total of 1,300 racing days, with 14,353 races held by local governments at the 15 racecourses. A total of 142,662 horses ran, with an average of 10.8 races per horse, in 2013.

Jump racing and harness racing, which had been run in the past, are currently not conducted due to declining numbers of available horses and jockeys.

Number of Race Days and Flat Races



Ban-ei (Draft Horse Racing)

Ban-ei racing is a unique kind of racing that is held only in Hokkaido by local government racing. It consists of draft horses weighing from 800 to 1,200 kg competing by pulling a sled with a jockey and a prescribed heavy load over a 200-meter dirt track that has two humps along the course.



History

The origin of draft horse racing dates back to Hokkaido's pioneer days, when contests of strength between horses used to transport lumber were held for celebrations and festivals. Dosanko (Hokkaido breeds) and other plow horse breeds native to Japan were used at the time. Belgian, Breton and Percheron lineage horses were then used after their subsequent introduction from Europe. Today, cross breeds between these three varieties, called "half breeds," or with native breeds are predominate, while purebreds are on the decline. The organized racing system was inaugurated by the racing authorities in 1946 and has continued to the present.



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Racing Calendar

Race meetings can last up to six days for racing conducted by government-designated prefectures and municipalities. A total of 1,300 meetings were held in 2013 in NAR.

NAR racing is conducted mainly on weekdays. There are differences in the schedules of racecourses in the metropolitan areas of Kanto, Tokai, Kansai and Hokkaido, and those of racecourses in other regions. Racecourses in major urban areas and Hokkaido hold their races on weekdays in order to avoid competition with JRA. On the other hand, in regions that are largely unaffected by JRA meetings, racing is primarily held on Saturdays and Sundays, when it is easier to attract local fans.

JBC races and other racing series

Based on the model of the BC (Breeders' Cup) in America and created from an initiative by breeders, the first JBC (Japan Breeding Farms' Cup) races were held at Ohi Racecourse in 2001. It consists of three races – the JBC Classic, Sprint and Ladies' Classic. As total prize money, the Classic offers ¥120 million, the highest amount in racing by local governments, while the Sprint offers ¥90 million and the Ladies' Classic ¥61.5 million, an unprecedented sum for racing by local governments.

Racing by local governments holds several different "Derby" races for three-year-olds on the local circuit. The interest in these Derby races were relatively low, partly because the prize money is lower compared to that of JRA's Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby) and nationwide recognition was low. Therefore, in order to raise awareness and interest, the six districts which held these separate Derby races collaborated and adjusted the racing calendar so that the Derby races are held over a continuous 6-day period at six different racecourses. Since 2007, this event has been tagged "Derby Week Series" to raise its profile and NAR has taken measures to expand nationwide off-track sales.

Also, NAR also conducts a series of races for fillies and mares, named "GRANDAME-JAPAN." The most outstanding fillies/mares are selected from each age group and they compete over a period of time, vying for the top spot – and incentive money – in their respective groups. Another series of races in the local circuit is the "Super Sprint Series," which began in 2011. It is a number of sprint races run over a track with only one bend.

Prize Money (purse)

Similar to JRA racing, prize money is generally allocated to the owners of the first five finishers in NAR racing. However, there is a huge disparity between the purses offered by different organizers. The highest purses are paid in thoroughbred races, and the largest first-place purse is ¥80 million for the JBC Classic. The total prize money in Racing by Local Governments in 2013 was ¥14.6 billion.

The system for distributing prize money to trainers, jockeys and grooms are similar to that of JRA racing.

International Relations

NAR first held its international invitation race in 1978, and ever since, it has been active in inviting jockeys from overseas to take part in their racing. The international invitation races known as the "Ladies Cup" was held for four consecutive years in the 1980's, with female jockeys from Europe, the USA, Canada and Japan competing with one another. During the five-year period from 1989 to 1993, NAR conducted the "International Queen Jockey Series," in which Japanese female jockeys rode together with female jockeys invited from the USA, Canada, Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand, as part of an international friendly among female jockeys. From 1982 to 1997, Niigata Racecourse was the host to the "Japan-Korea Challenge Cup" races, in which jockeys from the two nations were invited to race in each other's racecourse.

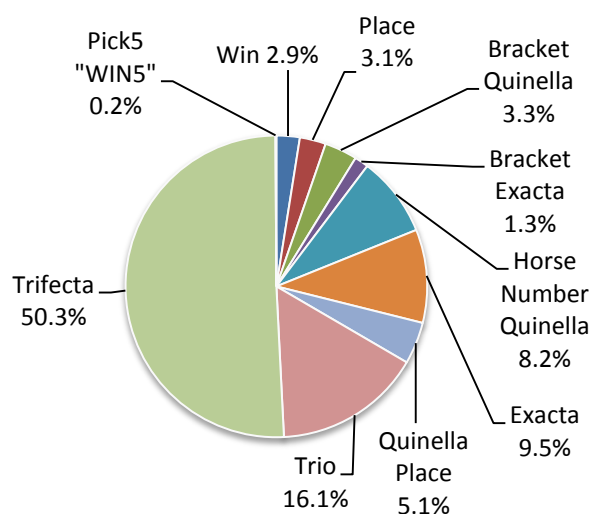
In 1995, Ohi Racecourse formed a friendly relationship with Santa Anita Park in the USA, inviting jockeys from the California circuit to ride in Japan. The friendly jockey series lasted for several years, and for the first time in 2011, the Tokyo Metropolitan Racing Association held the "Santa Anita Trophy" race as the international invitational race at Ohi Racecourse to commemorate 25 years of night racing. In 2013, Tokyo City Keiba (Ohi Racecourse) and the Korean Racing Authority initiated the first-ever "Japan-Korea international invitational race," inviting each organization's horses to run in Ohi Racecourse and Seoul Racecourse, respectively. The two-race series was first held at Seoul Racecourse in August, with three Japanese runners.

Betting

Type of Bets

Types of bets offered differ according to local racing venue. As of 2013, each organizer offers from eight to 10 varieties.

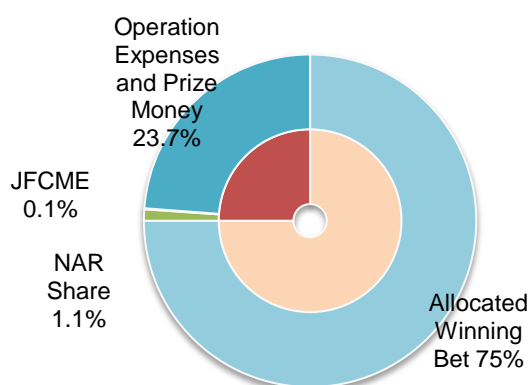
2013 Betting Turnover by Racing by Local Governments
(total turnover ¥353,570,596,200)



Deduction Rate

Racing by local governments deducts 25.0% of the total betting turnover, and the remaining 75.0% is allocated proportionally among winning bettors. Of this 25.0%, 1.1% is disbursed to NAR and around 0.1% to the Japan Finance Corporation for Municipal Enterprises (JFCME), a Japanese government agency. The remaining 23.7% is allocated to local governments for the administrative budget (0.9%), operating expenses and prize money.

NAR House Take Percentages



Off-Course Betting Facilities

As of 2012, wagers can be placed at 92 off-course betting facilities (including 18 tracks not hosting races).

Telephone Betting

Racing by local governments began offering telephone wagering in 1984. Telephone betting systems offered to fans vary according to local racing authority but are divided into two types: ARS and Internet betting (cell phones, smart phone or personal computers).

Similar to JRA's figures, local government racing also relies heavily on off-track sales. In 2001, the ratio of on-track/off-track sales was 50:50, but in 2013, the ratio drastically changed to 15:85. Sales at racecourses are decreasing year by year, but off-track sales are conversely in an increasing trend.

NAR Racing Education Center

Most of the active NAR licensed jockeys have completed the jockey course at the NAR Racing Education Center in Nasu, Tochigi Prefecture. Each year, the Center accepts some 15 students who have passed the examinations, ranging from 15-year-old junior high school graduates to 20-years-old adults. The training period lasts two years and includes a five-month practical training period under the guidance of a trainer with whom the candidate will become affiliated with upon graduation. Upon completion of the two-year course at the facility, jockeys make their debut after passing the jockey license examination.

The 30,000-square meter Center includes a 1,100-meter dirt track with four riding paddocks in the infield, an uphill training track, stable area with a capacity of 160 horses, veterinary clinic, farriery, etc. In 2010, the international quarantine stables were newly built for horses entering and leaving Japan.

Customer Services

From the betting perspective, one of the main focuses of NAR's customer service is to provide a betting channel that caters to a variety of punters' "life styles" – that is, to hold racing on weekdays and weekend, and from daytime, late afternoon and night time. In addition to preparing a variety in the racing calendar, organizers of local racing cooperate amongst one another by providing betting windows for races held outside of their courses – for example, a racecourse will hold racing during the day and keep the betting windows open at night as an off-track betting facility for races held elsewhere. Needless to say, for punters who are not able to visit the racecourse, there are a number of betting channels over the internet. In 2012, NAR and JRA developed a new integrated totalizator system, which allows members of JRA's internet betting system to purchase tickets for local racing.

Each racecourse plans its own events for the visiting fans – ranging from talk shows by television personalities and jockeys to charity events, as well as quiz contests with premium prizes. Also, a local racecourse will sell or give out their own local foods/products, taking a more "community-based" approach to attract racing fans.

Another characteristic of racing by local governments is that it provides individuals and corporations "naming rights" to certain races. The sponsors are invited to the racecourse on raceday, along with various promotions of the race and provided a guest room at the racecourse. Also, a visiting fan can win by lottery a chance to take part in the post-race presentation ceremony, providing a special occasion to interact with their favorite jockeys and/or racing personnel.

Some racecourses offer free-of-charge transportation to and from the nearest train station. Also, some racecourses will invite fans to watch "test races (barrier trials)" and give them a "behind-the-scenes" tour of a raceday operation, which are rare occasions for the casual racegoer.



Night racing under illuminations at Ohi Racecourse



"Live fanfare" before a race is one of the attractions at Ohi



Fans gather for a talk show at Sonoda Racecourse



Jockeys sign autographs for the enthusiastic fans

Racecourses

The lengths of racecourses of local governments range from 1,000 to 1,600 meters, track width from 16 to 25 meters, and homestretches from the fourth turn to the finish line range from 200 to 380 meters. The maximum number of runners range from 10 to 16 horses. The NAR racecourses are comparatively smaller than that of JRA racecourses and bends are comparatively sharper.

All NAR racecourses have only dirt tracks, with the exception of Morioka Racecourse which also has a turf track.



OBIHIRO

Ban-ei course	Length	Width
	200 m	21 m

MONBETSU

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,600.0m	25m	330 m

MORIOKA

Dirt course	Length (Width)
Left-handed	1,600.0m (25 m)
Straightaway	300 m

Turf course	Length (Width)
Left-handed	1,400.0m (25 m)
Straightaway	300 m

MIZUSAWA

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,200.0m	20m	200 m

KANAZAWA

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,200.0m	20 m	236 m

OHI

Dirt course	Length
Right-handed	1,400.0m (inner)/1,600.0m (outer)
Straightaway	286m(inner)/386m(outer)

FUNABASHI

Dirt course	Length
Left-handed	1,250.0 m(inner)/1,400.0 m(outer)
Straightaway	308 m

URAWA

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Left-handed	1,200.0m	16–21.5m	220 m

KAWASAKI

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Left-handed	1,200.0m	25 m	300 m

KASAMATSU

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,100.0m	20 m	201 m

NAGOYA

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,100.0m	23–25m	194 m

SONODA

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,051.0m	20–24m	213 m

HIMEJI

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,200.0m	20–25m	230 m

KOCHI

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,100.0m	22–27m	200 m

SAGA

Dirt course	Length	Width	Straightaway
Right-handed	1,100.0m	19.2–24m	200 m