

Free racing at Musselburgh this September



Musselburgh Stages Free September Race Day and Plans National Hunt Track Improvements

There's no such thing as a free lunch but there is a free race day at Musselburgh Racecourse on Monday September 17.

The East Lothian course is throwing open the gates and offering free entry in a joint initiative with the on-course bookmakers who are underwriting the venture. Musselburgh expect a bumper crowd as the race day falls on the traditional Edinburgh September Weekend holiday. Tickets are limited to two per person but must be booked online and are offered on a first come basis.

Advance bookings for the free day close at midnight on September 16 or when the tickets are 'sold out'.

Musselburgh Racecourse commercial manager, Karen Taylor, said: "This is a dual thank you to our racegoers from the bookmakers who turn up rain, hail or shine and from the racecourse itself. The September weekend is where people traditionally get away one last time before the weather changes and we reckon a large number will be happy to get away to Musselburgh for a free afternoon's racing."

The racecourse is also to invest £100,000 to improve the safety of horses and jockeys racing on its National Hunt jumps track.

Work is due to start on installing a 12 by 70 metre fibreglass strip after the winning post bend and the Musselburgh will be the first UK racecourse to integrate a composite material with a turf track.

The section of the track being replaced suffers from excessive wear and tear over the course of the winter jumps season which can cause the ground to become loose and a potential hazard for horses and jockeys.

The British Horseracing Authority has encouraged Musselburgh to make the changes while trainers and jockeys have given unanimous backing to the improvements.

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager, Bill Farnsworth, said: "This part of the track has caused some concern over the years so we are taking action before the start of our National Hunt season which begins on November 8.

"By replacing the turf with a fibre and sand mix it will reduce slippage and lessen the chance of injury to both horses and jockeys. This is the first time this method has been tried on a UK racecourse, and it is part and parcel of our commitment to continual improvement to conditions and facilities at Musselburgh, which keeps us ahead of the game in a very competitive market."