

Go racing at Musselburgh on New Year's Day to start 2018 off on the right foot

Two £30,000 races and a £20,000 support race look certain to attract another bumper crowd as Musselburgh Racecourse rings in the New Year on Monday.

The East Lothian track's traditional Totepool New Year's Day meeting, which also features the finals of the world's oldest athletics handicap race, The New Year Sprint, has developed in to one of Scotland's major sporting attractions held on 1 January.



With ticket sales similar to last year, Musselburgh expects another 6000-plus attendance and recommends race goers buy tickets in advance to avoid missing out on the first-class turf action.

In the feature race, the Totepool Hogmaneigh Hurdle Handicap (2.15), Aristo Du Plessis won this race in 2015 for Langholm trainer James Ewart and has scored twice at Wetherby this season, while Jim Goldie's Sir Chauvelin has enjoyed an excellent year on the Flat and returns to the scene of his two wins over hurdles.

Local racing fans will be interested in following Musselburgh Racecourse director Ray Anderson Green's Martila which won nicely at Ayr in November, while top trainer Paul Nicholls dispatches Brahms de Clermont from his Somerset yard.

In the £30,000 totequadpot Auld Reekie Handicap Chase (1.40) Northumberland father and son combination, Tim and Harry Reed, team up again with Indian Temple who won this race by seven

lengths in 2016.

Paul Nicholls has three entries in the shape of Orbasa, Marracudja and Tommy Silver who was third at Kempton over Christmas and is co-owned by Sir Alex Ferguson, while Upsilon Bleu, trained by Pauline Robson and a gallant runner-up in this race last year, wasn't beaten far in a valuable chase at Ascot just before Christmas.

The £20,000 toteexacta Hair Of The Dog Handicap Hurdle (1.05) has caught the eye of trainer Kim Bailey, one of a select band of trainers to have won the Grand National, Gold Cup and Champion Hurdle and she has entered double Ludlow winner Cresswell Legend.

Keith Dalgleish made history in 2017 when becoming the first Scottish trainer to saddle 100 winners over Flat and jumps in a calendar year, and the Carluke handler appears determined to get off to a flyer in 2018 as he is triple-handed with Rita's Man, Take The High Road and Uptown Funk in the opening race, the toteplacepot First Foot Juvenile Hurdle (12.30).

Musselburgh Racecourse chief executive, Bill Farnsworth, said: "The card has quality throughout with representation from some of the UK and the north's leading trainers and for sports fans there can't be a better way to bring in the New Year than experiencing competitive turf action.

"Tickets will be available on the day but as with all big meetings at Musselburgh it is wiser to book in advance to ensure your 2018 gets off to a cracking start and you experience a 1 January to remember."

The racecourse opens at the earlier time of 10.30am and there will be a selection of free samples of locally sourced foods, luxury hot chocolates and other drinks available, which will be served up until 11am.

Two DJs will create a party atmosphere with one located in

front of the grandstand playing between racing and the other on the decks in the extensive Loretto Lawn marquee.

Gates open 10.30am, first race is off at 12.30pm with the final race at 3.25pm. For further information and to book tickets please visit www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk