

National Hunt prize money jumps to £1 million at Musselburgh Racecourse

Musselburgh Racecourse raised the curtain today on a £1 million National Hunt season which also features the first £100,000 jumps race at the East Lothian track.

The 10-fixture season boasts record prize money of £1 million and the premier [bet363 Scottish Cheltenham Trials weekend](#) in February is assured to draw the UK's top trainers with more than £400,000 on offer.

Long established as a valuable trials test for top performing horses aiming to compete at the Cheltenham and Aintree festivals, the bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials is one of the most anticipated jumps weekends on the racing calendar, justifying ITV's coverage of seven races.

Prize money for the bet365 Edinburgh National has been doubled from last year to £100,000, while the Sunday meeting on 4 February will host a new race, the two-and-a-half mile £75,000 Scottish Champion Handicap Chase.

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager, Bill Farnsworth, said: "This will be without doubt our best ever jumps programme at Musselburgh and our first £100,000 National Hunt race will be a top draw for the country's leading stables.

"The cards over both days are jam-packed with prep races for

Cheltenham and Aintree and if racing fans want to see the very best horses and jockeys warming up for the big Spring festivals, they should come to Musselburgh.”

Other National Hunt season highlights include [the hugely popular New Year’s Day meeting](#) and Farnsworth is hoping to attract a sponsor as Musselburgh welcomes in 2024 with another 6,000-plus sell-out crowd.



Scottish Cheltenham Trials Weekend at Musselburgh Racecourse
Picture: Alan Rennie

Jumping ahead to next April, Musselburgh ends on a high as a finals weekend venue (with Kelso and Carlisle) for [the Racing Post Go North festival](#) which features eleven finals worth £30,000 each over three days.

Farnsworth added: “At the start of the National Hunt season, owners and trainers are hoping their horses will progress to make it to what is effectively the Olympics of horse racing at the Cheltenham Festival, but of course, a lot of them will not achieve those heights.

“The Go North weekend is a fantastic way to showcase those horses which have featured across northern tracks over the winter and this is a fitting finale to mark the contribution they have made.”

Musselburgh starts the jumps season on a high after a successful Flat season which has seen better than expected attendances as crowds flocked back to post-Covid racing.



£1 million prize money over Musselburgh Racecourse’s National Hunt season – Picture: Alan Rennie

Total attendances over the 27 meetings were 60,737 compared to the last full pre-Covid season in 2019 when 57,864 visited the East Lothian course – a jump of 5% despite moving the sell-out Ladies Day fixture from a Saturday to Friday and cutting back the maximum 10,000 attendance to 7,000.

He said: “It has been a fantastic Flat season because we were forecasting to record a significant loss but have managed to turn the ship around. It’s partly down to people getting Covid out of their system, they have gone on holiday, attended

delayed weddings and celebrations, and have come back racing.

“The weather has played a huge role and despite it being a wetter than usual year, we were extremely fortunate in that all of our ‘big’ race days – from Easter Saturday, the Edinburgh Cup, Ladies Day and through to our September finale – benefited from excellent weather.

“Consumers are not cash rich, they are very choosy on how they spend their money, but if the sun is shining – and we deliver great hospitality and entertainment – then a day at the races is a highly attractive proposition.”

