

250,000 more go to Valley races

ALMOST a quarter of a million more people went to the Happy Valley races in the season just ended than the previous season.

And they bet 100 million dollars more than the previous season.

The massive upsurge in turnover and attendance prompted the Jockey Club's General Manager, General Bernard Penfold, to say today the off-course bookmakers have started to suffer.

And "what the government has done has begun to tell."

This was a direct reference to the tightening of the Betting Ordinance and the legalisation of off-course betting shops.

General Penfold said 1,702,979 people went to Happy Valley last season — a rise of 15.5 percent on the 1,473,934 of the previous season.

They had wagered a total of \$2.9 billion as opposed to \$1.9 billion in the previous

season.

General Penfold said the 15 percent attendance increase was "perhaps surprising."

"But looking at other countries who have established legalised off-course betting this pattern shows people still want to go racing," he said.

"They just don't want to bet on numbers outside. They are interested in going to see racing as well."

General Penfold said the number of favourites which won at Happy Valley last season followed the established line of about 30 percent.

He said for all races the number of winning favourites was 31 percent. In handicap races the favourites won 29 percent, in terms races 44 percent, on the grass 31.72 percent and on the sand 31.47 percent.

The General said he considered these figures "quite significant."

Referring to horses for next season, General Penfold said the \$25,000 Australian Griffins would arrive in July.

They would race as one class except for weight-for-age benefits.

The 60 \$50,000 horses from Australia, the United Kingdom and Ireland would be classified at the discretion of the handicapper.

The General said the classification last season of the \$50,000 horses to Classes

1 and 2, depending on age, had not been entirely successful.

The handicapper before next season would research the \$50,000 horses' past performances and classify them — probably to Classes 1 to 3.

The handicapper also would classify the \$25,000 horses from the United Kingdom and Ireland — from Class 1, "hopefully, very hopefully" — down to Class 4.

All the new horses except the \$25,000 Australian Griffins would be given pre-season ratings. They would not run with automatically set weights of 128 pounds.

General Penfold said next season's Derby would be during the Easter meeting — about a month later than last season — and the Champions and Charter Cup would be run in April instead of May and over 1800 metres instead of 2230 metres.

On other matters he said owners successful in drawing a horse would be notified today and the club planned considerable improvement in the stands before next season.

This would involve more seating and air conditioning in parts of the Members' Stand and seating and air flow improvements in the public stand and the infield.

The General said anything that could be done to make racing more comfortable "must be done."