



Fashions on the Field 2026

FOTF GUIDE

The Cooktown Races has been an annual tradition since 1874, providing locals and visitors a chance to dress up, mingle and enjoy the country racing atmosphere. Fashions on the Field has grown in popularity in recent years, and for many is a highlight of the day that rivals the horse racing itself.

The fashion fun is open to all ages, with categories for children, men, women, millinery and our fun category for the best (or funniest) dressed family or friend group aligned with this year's theme – Racing to the Reef.

Deciding what to wear should take into consideration the theme, your budget, your personal style, the climate and current fashion trends.

Nominations are taken on the day at the Fashions marquee near the front entrance to the clubhouse.

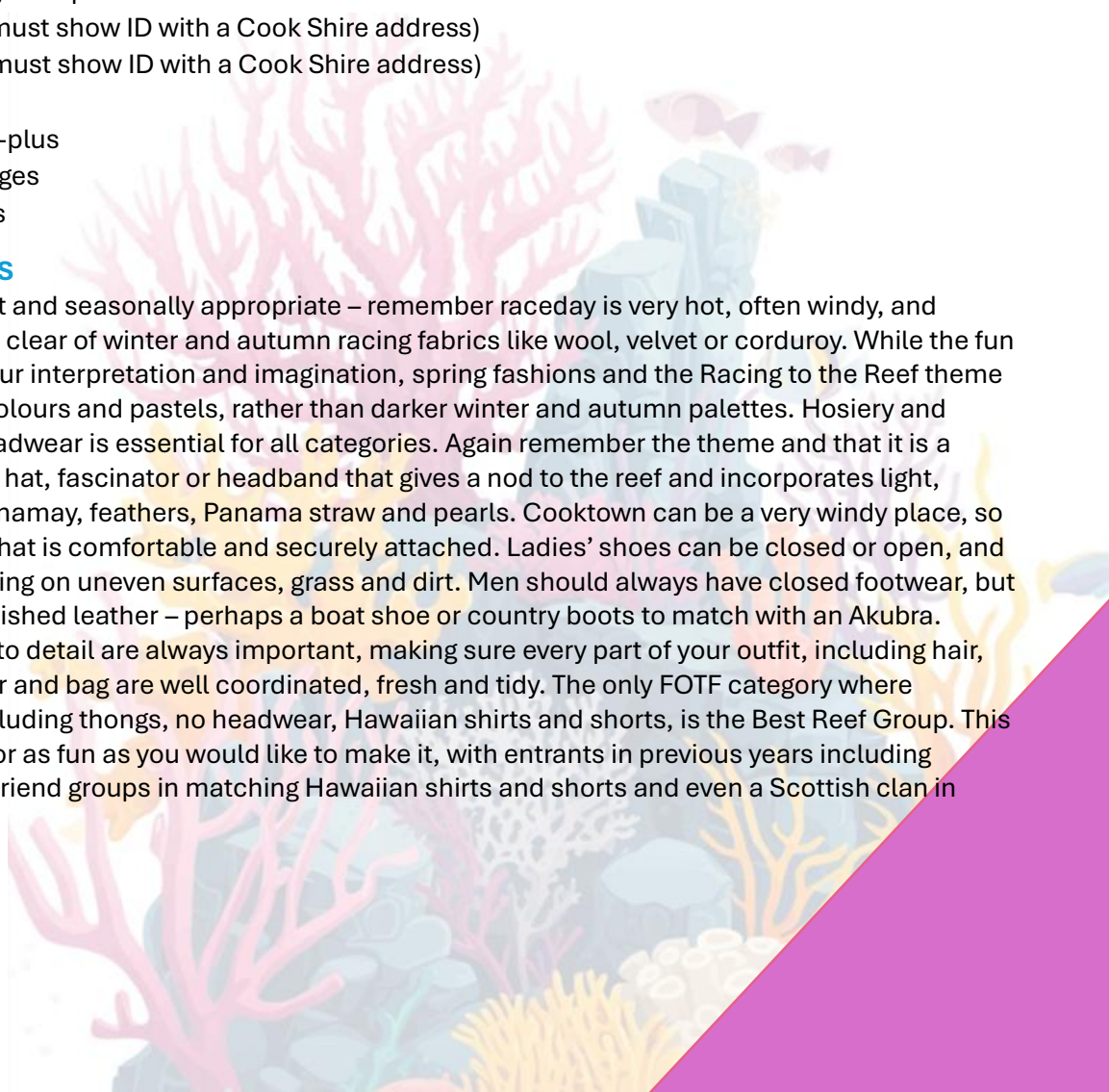
Fashionistas are able to enter multiple categories, providing they are eligible, ie a Cooktown man could enter Local Male, Best Millinery and Dapper Male.

OUR CATEGORIES THIS YEAR ARE:

- Little Ones – 0-5yo
- Little Miss and Mister – 6-12yo
- Young Lady and Young Sir – 13-17yo
- Lady of the Day – 18-39yo
- Golden Lady of the Day – 40-plus
- Local Lady – 18-plus (must show ID with a Cook Shire address)
- Local Male – 18-plus (must show ID with a Cook Shire address)
- Dapper Male – 18-plus
- Couple of the Day – 18-plus
- Best Reef Group – all ages
- Best Millinery – all ages

GENERAL RACEWEAR TIPS

Fabrics should be kept light and seasonally appropriate – remember raceday is very hot, often windy, and occasionally rainy, so steer clear of winter and autumn racing fabrics like wool, velvet or corduroy. While the fun of fashion is it is open to your interpretation and imagination, spring fashions and the Racing to the Reef theme lean towards bright fresh colours and pastels, rather than darker winter and autumn palettes. Hosiery and gloves are optional, but headwear is essential for all categories. Again remember the theme and that it is a spring race meet, picking a hat, fascinator or headband that gives a nod to the reef and incorporates light, spring materials such as sinamay, feathers, Panama straw and pearls. Cooktown can be a very windy place, so pick an appropriate piece that is comfortable and securely attached. Ladies' shoes can be closed or open, and should be suitable for walking on uneven surfaces, grass and dirt. Men should always have closed footwear, but think outside the box of polished leather – perhaps a boat shoe or country boots to match with an Akubra. Accessories and attention to detail are always important, making sure every part of your outfit, including hair, makeup, jewellery, eyewear and bag are well coordinated, fresh and tidy. The only FOTF category where (almost) anything goes, including thongs, no headwear, Hawaiian shirts and shorts, is the Best Reef Group. This category can be as formal or as fun as you would like to make it, with entrants in previous years including stylishly dressed families, friend groups in matching Hawaiian shirts and shorts and even a Scottish clan in kilts.



DRESSING FOR THE THEME – RACING TO THE REEF

The theme is open to your interpretation – does it bring to mind a coral fascinator, pearl accessories, fishnet-esque fabric, a shell border, or all the bright colours of the Great Barrier Reef? We can't wait to see! But we do have a few suggestions below.

Ladies...

- Bright, light or pastel colour palettes – steer away from dark winter and autumn colours like burgundy, black and khaki.
- Pick a statement piece – a fishy fascinator, an amazing clutch, pearl heels or a standout dress – and coordinate the rest of your outfit to complement.
- Details, details, details! Don't forget nailpolish, jewellery, makeup, styled hair, clean shoes, matching accessories, and ensure the colours and patterns in your outfit and accessories complement each other. These are the little details the judges will be looking for.

Men...

- Jackets, ties, hats and closed shoes are a must, but lean towards spring colours and fabrics, whether it's a daring colourful suit, or reef-inspired pops of colour in your tie, boutonniere or pocket square and cufflinks.
- Don't go with a plain dark suit. If you would wear it to a wedding or work, it's probably not right for FOTF! Think lighter colours and fabrics, and something a little more unique and aligned to the Reef theme.
- Shoes must be closed in, but don't necessarily have to be formal, a classy boat shoe or clean country boots could complement your outfit nicely. Please no joggers, Crocs (even in sports mode!) or sandals though.

EXTRA RACEDAY ITEMS

The races is a bucket-load of fun, but also a long, hot day, with plenty of time spent in the sun and on your feet. You may like to bring other items to wear in between FOTF categories or afterwards and to make the day more comfortable, such as flat shoes, a parasol or umbrella, sunhat, sunglasses, bandaids, makeup for touch ups and bobby pins.

