

CALENDAR NOTICE (to be published 15 January 2016)

Disciplinary Committee Inquiries

The Disciplinary Committee of the GBGB were in attendance at a meeting held on 15 December 2015:-

Mr K Salmon (in the chair)

Mr R Coughlan

Dr AJ Higgins

1. Newcastle Stadium – POND MOZART– Professional Trainer Mr H Williams

Professional Trainer Harry Williams was found in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(a), and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound POND MOZART at Newcastle Stadium on 5 May 2015 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of meloxicam; and that he allowed a substance to be administered that could affect the performance and/or wellbeing of the greyhound.

Mr Williams apologised for his non-attendance as did Paul Twinn, racing manager of Newcastle Stadium. Paul Illingworth, senior stipendiary steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

On 5 May 2015 POND MOZART, a greyhound trained by Mr Williams, was subject to a post-race urine sample which, on analysis, tested positive for the presence of meloxicam.

The Disciplinary Committee noted the evidence of Professor Morris that meloxicam is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) used to relieve pain, reduce fever and reduce inflammation. Meloxicam has the potential to induce adverse reactions including vomiting and gastrointestinal ulceration and is a substance which by its nature could affect the performance of a greyhound or prejudice its wellbeing.

Mr Williams admitted the breaches of the rules of racing. He explained that POND MOZART had been prescribed meloxicam on 25 February 2015 for the treatment of a longstanding toe injury.

The Committee took into account the statement of Frances Allen MRCVS, the veterinary surgeon who prescribed meloxicam, to the effect that the drug was to be given orally for 5-7 days until the toenail was apparently pain free. Thus, the precise duration of the administration was seemingly a matter for Mr William's discretion.

On 1 May 2015, following paddock exercise, the same injury recurred and Mrs Rita Williams, who is a licensed kennelhand, administered the remaining meloxicam. It is unclear whether or not she was aware that POND MOZART was due to run on 5 May 2015.

The Committee accepted this explanation.

The Committee noted that Mr Williams was candid, and admitted the breaches at the first opportunity. Further, that meloxicam was administered to the greyhound for which it had been prescribed and that the veterinary advice was to an extent equivocal. They also noted that Mr Williams had attended on 12 November 2015 when this Inquiry was first scheduled.

Nonetheless, these were clear breaches of the rules of racing and in particular of rule 217 which states that a greyhound when taking part in a race or trial must be free of any substance which by its nature could affect its performance or wellbeing.

In all the circumstances of this Inquiry, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Mr Williams be cautioned.

The Committee had considered whether there should be a fine in addition to the caution. They noted that this was a four year old greyhound that had now retired and Mr Williams acted with the greyhound's welfare in mind. In those circumstances, the Committee did not impose a fine.

Nonetheless, the Disciplinary Committee would urge all trainers to be mindful of rule 217 and to ensure that all their kennelhands are made aware of the provisions.

2. Romford Stadium – FISHER MONZA – Professional Trainer Mr E Gaskin

Professional Trainer Ernest Gaskin was found in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(b), 214 and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound FISHER MONZA at Romford Stadium on 13 July 2015 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of a metabolite of pentobarbital.

Mr Gaskin was in attendance accompanied by his wife. David MacDonald, authorised representative of Romford Stadium, Adrian Smith, stipendiary steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

On 13 July 2015 FISHER MONZA, a greyhound trained by Mr Gaskin, was subject to a pre-race urine sample which on analysis tested positive for a metabolite of pentobarbital.

The Disciplinary Committee heard evidence from Professor Morris to the effect that pentobarbital is available as a veterinary medicine as a concentrated solution for injections for euthanasia of animals. Pentobarbital affects dogs with increasing doses causing sedation, anaesthesia and then death through respiratory and cardiac arrest, and is thus a substance which by its nature could affect the performance or prejudice the welfare of a greyhound.

Mr Gaskin gave evidence to the Committee and consistently expressed his firm belief that this positive arose from the feeding of contaminated meat. Mr Gaskin told the Committee, and the Committee accepted, that he only ever fed category 3 meat supplied by D Gibbs.

In theory this positive sample could either have arisen from the deliberate administration of pentobarbital or from the feeding of contaminated meat.

The Committee heard the evidence of Professor Morris as to the considerable risks and difficulties inherent in deliberate administration and rejected that as a possibility.

The Committee found Mr Gaskin to be a truthful witness who was doing his best to assist this Inquiry and they accepted that he only fed category 3 meat. That being so, the Committee was driven to the conclusion that D Gibbs supplied meat, which although it was seemingly sold as category 3 meat, was in fact contaminated with category 2 meat.

The Committee noted that there was no confirmation on any of the receipts supplied by Mr Gaskin that what had been supplied was, in fact, category 3 meat. The relevant box on the receipts was never ticked in spite of this being a DEFRA requirement. The Committee had seen letters from D Gibbs in which he stated that he only ever supplied category 3 meat, but they could attach little credence to these documents.

The Committee urges GBGB to remind trainers to ensure that it is stated on the receipt what category of meat is being supplied.

Some of the GBGB Rules of Racing impose strict liability on the trainer or registered sales agent. In all of the circumstances of this Inquiry, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Mr Gaskin be cautioned. The Committee noted that Mr Gaskin had been consistent in his explanation and had always admitted the presence of the pentobarbital in the greyhound FISHER MONZA.

The Committee accepted that Mr Gaskin bought meat in good faith believing it to be category 3 meat. The only criticism that can be made of him was that he did not insist that the receipts stated what category of meat was being supplied. The Committee was pleased to note that he now insists on this. In those circumstances the Committee did not consider it necessary to impose any penalty other than a caution.

3. Pelaw Stadium – HEADFORD SEASON – Greyhound Trainer Mr D Cowell

Greyhound Trainer Darren Cowell was found in breach of rules 152 (i) & (ii), 174 (i)(b), 214 and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound HEADFORD SEASON at Pelaw Grange Stadium on 12 July 2015 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of a metabolite of pentobarbital.

Mr Cowell was not in attendance. David Gray, racing manager of Pelaw Grange Stadium apologised for his non-attendance. Paul Illingworth, senior stipendiary steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

On 12 July 2015 HEADFORD SEASON, a greyhound trained by Mr Cowell, was subject to a pre-race sample which tested positive for a metabolite of pentobarbital.

The Disciplinary Committee heard evidence from Professor Morris to the effect that pentobarbital is available as a veterinary medicine as a concentrated solution for injections for euthanasia of animals. Pentobarbital affects dogs with increasing doses causing sedation, anaesthesia and then death through respiratory and cardiac arrest, and is thus a substance which by its nature could affect the performance or prejudice the welfare of a greyhound.

Mr Cowell said at the local inquiry that he would not attend before the Disciplinary Committee and, true to his word, he did not attend. The Committee was disappointed that Mr Cowell chose not to attend. It would have been very helpful had they been able to ask Mr Cowell questions, especially as regards his feeding regime. In his absence, the Committee had been forced to do the best it could with the evidence before it and has had to draw inferences which might have been different had Mr Cowell chosen to attend.

In his written statement Mr Cowell stated that he believed HEADFORD SEASON had pentobarbital in its system when he took delivery of the greyhound on 1 June 2015. Professor Morris's evidence was that in his opinion pentobarbital metabolites would not be found following exposure to the parent drug on or before 1 June 2015. The Committee accepted this view and therefore rejected Mr Cowell's explanation.

The Committee was also satisfied on the balance of probabilities that HEADFORD SEASON did not test positive as a result of the deliberate administration of pentobarbital. They noted that there was considerable risks and difficulties inherent in deliberate administration and also noted that HEADFORD SEASON won its race on 12 July 2015 and was sold on shortly thereafter both of which circumstances strongly militated against deliberate administration.

It follows that the likeliest source of pentobarbital was contaminated meat. Mr Cowell asserted in his written evidence that he fed only supermarket beef fit for human consumption. Professor Morris stated that tight regulatory controls made it very unlikely that supermarket beef would be a source of pentobarbital. The Committee therefore rejected Mr Cowell's evidence in that regard.

The Committee considered the likeliest explanation for the presence of pentobarbital was that Mr Cowell fed contaminated category 2 meat to HEADFORD SEASON in contravention of GBGB guidance. They noted that he admitted feeding raw meat on race days, also in contravention of GBGB guidance, which the Committee regarded as evidence of a cavalier attitude to such guidance.

Some of the GBGB Rules of Racing impose strict liability on the trainer or registered sales agent. In all the circumstances of this Inquiry, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Mr Cowell be reprimanded and fined £600.