

Disciplinary Committee Inquiries

The Disciplinary Committee of the GBGB were in attendance at a meeting held on 7 September 2017:-

Mr R Woodworth CBE (in the chair)
Dr AJ Higgins
Mr A Hunt

1. Swindon Stadium – ABALONES GIRL – Professional Trainer Mrs G Hepden

Professional Trainer Ghislaine Hepden was found in breach of rules 174 (i)(b) and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound ABALONES GIRL at Swindon Stadium on 24 April 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of glaucine.

Mrs Hepden apologised for her non-attendance as did Clive Oseman, racing manager of Swindon Stadium. Stipendiary steward Meriel France and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

The Committee expressed serious regret that Mrs Hepden was not present at this inquiry.

Professor Morris told the Committee that glaucine was not available as a veterinary medicine. It has been used as an anti-cough medicine in Eastern Europe and Russia but was not available in Western Europe. Sources in the United States had told him it was not now readily available to buy on the internet as a medicine. The substance could also originate from plants such as the yellow horned poppy and the tulip poplar tree, which tree grows widely in the eastern states of the USA. It can also be produced by chemical synthesis. Glaucine suppresses coughing in animals and humans. It was also reported to cause weakness, sleepiness, nausea, dilation of the pupils, hallucinations and lowered blood pressure. A so-called herbal preparation was available as a 'legal high'. In Professor Morris's opinion, it was a substance which by its nature could affect the performance and/or prejudice the wellbeing of a greyhound.

While the Committee concluded that the source of the glaucine in this case was most likely to be the use of sawdust on kennel floors originating from wood shavings contaminated by tulip wood, the Committee could not be entirely sure. The wood shavings had not been tested and the other alkaloids which often accompany glaucine were not present alongside the glaucine in the urine sample. The level of glaucine found in the sample was significant and would have had a clinical effect on the dog to prejudice its performance as well as prejudicing its wellbeing.

Mrs Hepden gave evidence that she had changed her supplier of sawdust. The Committee noted that there had been no adverse betting patterns detected and no issues of form.

The Committee was unable from the evidence to determine the source of the glaucine. Nevertheless, they concluded on the balance of probabilities that there had been no deliberate administration in this case and whilst finding Mrs Hepden in breach of rules 174 (i)(b) and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing, in view of her excellent training record and the positive comment from the Swindon joint racing manager as to her integrity, decided to take no further action.

The Committee recommended that the Board publish a calendar notice to trainers warning of the risk of using contaminated sawdust in their kennel in view of the incidence of 5 glaucine cases in 2 years.

2. Perry Barr Stadium – TULLIG HOGG – Professional Trainer Mr P Holland

Professional Trainer Peter Holland was found in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(b) and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound TULLIG HOGG at Perry Barr Stadium on 14 May 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of dehydronorketamine.

Mr Holland apologised for his non-attendance as did Martin Seal, racing manager of Perry Barr Stadium and stipendiary steward Paula Clare. Senior stipendiary steward Paul Illingworth and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

The Committee would have been assisted in their deliberations had Mr Holland been present at the inquiry and seriously regretted his absence.

Professor Morris told the Committee that dehydronorketamine was a metabolite which results from the exposure of dogs to ketamine. Ketamine is available as a veterinary medicine for use as an anaesthetic. It is also well recognised as a drug of abuse. Ketamine affects dogs as it does other animals and people, causing sedation and anaesthesia. In Professor Morris's opinion ketamine, whose presence here is indicated by the metabolite dehydronorketamine, is a depressant of the nervous system and a substance which by its nature could affect the performance or prejudice the wellbeing of a greyhound.

Mr Holland suggested in his written statements that the dehydronorketamine (a metabolite of ketamine) could only have come "through the meat" he was feeding but on the evidence supplied by him, namely his ABP licence for category 3 products and the supplier's invoices referencing the ABP licence, ketamine should not have been present.

The dog had had no recorded treatment involving ketamine.

While ketamine is commonly used as a sedative in the pre-treatment for euthanasia of horses (Mr Holland previously fed large amounts of horsemeat) it is used in combination with other agents. No evidence of metabolites of such other agents was found in the sample. Ketamine is a well-recognised drug of abuse which is used as a powder that, inter alia, may be rubbed onto the gums or smoked.

The Committee noted that none of Mr Holland's other greyhounds had tested positive for ketamine metabolites despite apparently being fed the same feed.

There were therefore a number of inconsistencies and the source of the ketamine metabolite could not be identified from the evidence. The Committee were unable to determine whether the dehydronorketamine had resulted from Mr Holland's feeding regime or from a deliberate administration of ketamine. The Committee found him in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(b) and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing and ordered that he be reprimanded and fined £500.

3. Sunderland Stadium – RELEASETHEBEAST – Professional Trainer Mrs A McNicholas

Professional Trainer Angela McNicholas was found in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(b), and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound RELEASETHEBEAST at Sunderland Stadium on 24 May 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of cyclizine.

Mrs McNicholas apologised for her non-attendance as did Michael Patterson, racing manager of Sunderland Stadium and stipendiary steward Alex McTaggart. Senior stipendiary steward Paul Illingworth and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

The Committee were particularly sympathetic to Mrs McNicholas' family circumstances but nevertheless felt that she or one of her kennelhands should have attended the inquiry.

Professor Morris told the Committee that cyclizine is not available as a veterinary medicine. Although it is used as a medicine for people it is not normally used in animals. Cyclizine is an anti-histamine that affects dogs as it does other animals and people. It has a range of side effects, in particular, it causes sedation at clinical doses and more serious effects on the nervous system at higher doses. In Professor Morris's opinion cyclizine, as a sedative anti-histamine, is a substance which by its nature could affect the performance or prejudice the wellbeing of a greyhound.

In this case, the amount of cyclizine found in the positive sample suggested that the administration of cyclizine to the dog, whether accidental or not, had been significant. While cyclizine is known as a "stopper" and the dog in question ran a faster than normal trial, the Committee heard that the cyclizine could have the effect of calming a hyperactive animal. In this respect, they would have been assisted had the trainer or her representative been present.

The Committee was unable from the evidence to determine the source of the cyclizine or conclude whether the drugs had been deliberately administered or accidentally ingested by the greyhound. While the Committee acknowledged that the trainer's husband had been using prescribed cyclizine at the time of the positive sample, the Committee were not convinced that the medication in the form of small tablets in a blister pack and apparently carried around the kennels by the trainer's husband, could have become easily available to and so ingested by the dog. The amount of cyclizine found in the sample could not have been caused by mere cross-contamination. If in fact it had been that the case that the positive sample was caused by a dropped cyclizine tablet then the Committee considered the trainer's kennel husbandry to be at fault.

In all the circumstances of the case, the Disciplinary Committee found Mrs McNicholas in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(b) and 217 and ordered that she be reprimanded and fined £600.