

## **Disciplinary Committee Inquiries**

The Disciplinary Committee of the GBGB were in attendance at a meeting held on 12 October 2017:-

Mr R Woodworth CBE (in the chair)

Mr R Coughlan

Mr M Elks

### **1. Pelaw Grange Stadium – GURTNACREHY LOLA – Greyhound Trainer Mr S Francis**

Greyhound Trainer Stephen Francis was found in breach of rules 152 (i) & (ii), 174 (i)(a) and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound GURTNACREHY LOLA at Pelaw Grange Stadium on 11 June 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of propranolol; and that he allowed a substance to be administered that could affect the performance and/or wellbeing of the greyhound.

Mr Francis was in attendance. David Gray, racing manager of Pelaw Grange Stadium, apologised for his non-attendance. Alex McTaggart, stipendiary steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

The Committee thanked Mr Francis for attending the hearing.

Professor Morris told the Committee that whilst propranolol is not licenced as a veterinary medicine, it is used in dogs under the prescribing cascade. Propranolol is used in dogs to treat cardiac arrhythmias (abnormal heart beats), and where the heart is enlarged. It affects dogs as it does other animals and people, with a depressant effect on the cardiovascular system, and this has been shown to reduce racing performance in greyhounds. In Professor Morris's opinion propranolol, as a depressant of the cardiovascular system, is a substance which by its nature could affect the performance and/or prejudice the wellbeing of a greyhound.

The Committee heard that propranolol, being a beta blocker is a classic "stopper" and the greyhound's performance in the race in question supported that conclusion although there was no evidence of the dog having been back to lose.

Mr Francis could not account for the positive sample of propranolol found in his greyhound GURTNACREHY LOLA in the race on 11 June 2017 except to suggest that the dog might have picked it up while having a gallop on a football pitch near his kennels and getting into some nearby rubbish through a hole in the fence. At the same time, he admitted that he couldn't even be certain that the dog had in fact been given a pre-race gallop on the morning in question.

Although Mr Francis denied administering propranolol and also stated that he trusted his staff implicitly not to have done so, the Committee concluded on the balance of probabilities that this was what happened. The Committee were concerned not only with the effect on the integrity of the sport but also on the wellbeing of the greyhound and had it not been for Mr Francis' unblemished record thus far they would have followed the Director of Regulation's submission that disqualification was an appropriate sanction.

As it was, the Committee ordered a withdrawal of Mr Francis' licence for 12 months, such withdrawal being suspended for 12 months and a fine of £500. Any further breach of the rules during the next 12 months would automatically result in disqualification or withdrawal of licence.

## **2. Newcastle Stadium – LINKLUCKY COOKIE – Professional Trainer Mr T Heilbron**

Professional Trainer Tom Heilbron 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 LINKLUCKY COOKIE at Newcastle Stadium on 8 June 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of minoxidil.

Mr Heilbron was unable to attend in person but participated by means of telephone conference. Paul Twinn, racing manager of Newcastle Stadium, apologised for his non-attendance. Alex McTaggart, stipendiary steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

Professor Morris told the Committee that minoxidil was not available as a veterinary medicine. It is used as a topical treatment for hair loss in people. Its use has been suggested in dogs for hair loss, but this is not recommended due to side effects in dogs. Minoxidil affects dogs, stimulating the output from the heart and can have toxic effects on the heart. In Professor Morris's opinion minoxidil, with a stimulatory and toxic effect on the heart, is a substance which by its nature could affect the performance and/or prejudice the wellbeing of a greyhound. Professor Morris added that minoxidil is a powerful topical preparation and the sample analysis showed the presence of both the parent drug (minoxidil) as well as a urinary metabolite indicated as a screening finding. This suggested that LINKLUCKY COOKIE's urinary sample had not been contaminated after exiting the dog but that contamination of the dog itself must have occurred as a result of Mr Heilbron having minoxidil on his hands or clothing.

The Committee heard that Mr Heilbron raised two possibilities for the cause of the positive sample of minoxidil given by greyhound LINKLUCKY COOKIE on 8 June 2017. Despite Mr Heilbron receiving a threatening text message which might suggest that a third party had deliberately administered the substance to the dog in order to get the trainer into trouble, the Committee thought this possibility unlikely and rejected it. However, Mr Heilbron explained to the Committee that he had used minoxidil as one of a number of random treatments for hair loss on his pet greyhound which had been diagnosed by the veterinary surgeon as suffering from an auto-immune condition which resulted in considerable weight and hair loss. However, the vet had not prescribed the use of minoxidil which Mr Heilbron had used on the advice of another trainer. He had purchased it on the internet as he does with a variety of other products most of which are herbal. Mr Heilbron stated that he had not bothered reading the instruction leaflet which accompanied the minoxidil and accordingly, had not bothered washing his hands after applying the minoxidil to his pet dog and before later coming into contact with his racing greyhounds.

Minoxidil in small quantities – as a blood vessel dilator – could have the effect of assisting a dog's performance but in larger quantities would have the opposite effect. In either case, the drug could produce serious adverse effects to the greyhound. The Committee considered it unlikely that there was any advantage to Mr Heilbron of having his dog "stopped" or "started" in his last qualifying sprint

trial when the dog's ability had been well canvassed in its previous trials. Accordingly, the Committee concluded on the balance of probabilities that an accidental contamination had occurred.

However, they were concerned about Mr Heilbron's practice of using the internet for buying medicines and tonics without knowing always what they contained. They were also concerned at his poor kennel husbandry in terms of not apparently washing his hands after administering minoxidil to his pet greyhound.

Taking into account Mr Heilbron's unblemished record to date, the Disciplinary Committee cautioned him and fined him £250.

### **3. Shawfield Stadium – MAIN INCOMER – Owner Trainer Mr R McStravock**

Owner Trainer Robert McStravock was found in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(a), 216 and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound MAIN INCOMER at Shawfield Stadium on 16 June 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of diphenhydramine; and that he allowed a substance to be administered that could affect the performance and/or wellbeing of the greyhound.

Mr McStravock apologised for his absence as did Daniel Rankin, racing manager of Shawfield Stadium. Alex McTaggart, stipendiary steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

Professor Morris told the Committee that diphenhydramine is not available as a veterinary medicine but is used in dogs to treat the effects of skin disease and control travel sickness. For human medical use diphenhydramine, a sedating antihistamine, is used for the symptomatic relief of allergic conditions and motion sickness. Diphenhydramine affects dogs as it does other animals and people, causing sedation. Over-dosage can cause excitement and high blood pressure. In Professor Morris's opinion diphenhydramine as a sedative is a substance which by its nature could affect the performance and/or prejudice the wellbeing of a greyhound.

Mr McStravock admitted by his statement (and at the local inquiry) a breach of the strict liability rule 174 (i)(a) in that he had administered an anti-histamine cream (twice a day for 6 days) containing diphenhydramine to his greyhound MAIN INCOMER. This occurred after the dog had been stung "by a hornet" and the Committee accepted that he had acted in the best interests of the greyhound. However, the greyhound should not have been racing during this period. The Committee accepted that there had been no intention on Mr McStravock's part to affect the performance of the greyhound but he had been casual in terms of being unconcerned about the effect of the anti-histamine on the performance and wellbeing of the greyhound.

Similarly, the Committee noted that there were no entries in Mr McStravock's Treatment Book and while they sympathised with the personal difficulties faced by him, considered this unacceptable.

He was cautioned and fined a total of £250 of which £50 was in respect of the breach of rule 216. Further, he was advised that rules for Owner Trainers, while setting a different standard to those

applicable to Professional/Greyhound Trainers, did oblige trainers to familiarise themselves with the GBGB Rules of Racing and the Calendar, and to complete the Treatment Book.