

Disciplinary Committee Inquiries

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

Mr R Woodworth CBE (in the chair)

Mr M Elks

Mr K Salmon

1. Crayford Stadium – CALL HIM ON – Professional Trainer Miss J Luckhurst

Professional Trainer Julie Luckhurst 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 CALL HIM ON at Crayford Stadium on 11 August 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of pentobarbital and hydroxylated metabolites of pentobarbital.

Miss Luckhurst was in attendance and accompanied by kennelhand Mike Jeive. Danny Rayment, racing manager of Crayford Stadium, apologised for his non-attendance. Hayley Huntley, Stipendiary Steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

Professor Morris gave evidence that pentobarbital is used as a concentrated solution for euthanasia of animals and is a Controlled Drug in the UK. It causes sedation, anaesthesia and death by cardiac arrest. The exposure of dogs to pentobarbital from any contaminated meat has a realistic risk of adverse effects. As such it was the opinion of Professor Morris that as a depressant of the nervous and respiratory systems, pentobarbital is a substance which by its nature could affect the performance of a greyhound or prejudice its welfare.

Miss Luckhurst stressed that she had not administered pentobarbital to CALL HIM ON. Mr Gibson, for the Board, confirmed that there had been no unusual betting activity on the race in question and stipendiary steward Mrs Huntley also confirmed that the dog's performance in the race had not been untypical. Miss Luckhurst who had the appropriate DEFRA licence, only fed category 3 meat (for which receipts were placed before the Committee) obtained from DG Trading, supplemented with chicken which Professor Morris suggested was a most unlikely source of the pentobarbital. The dog had had no veterinary treatment at the time of the race which might have been the source of the pentobarbital and the Committee concluded that Miss Luckhurst was a credible witness and that in all probability the source of the pentobarbital was contaminated meat inadvertently fed by Miss Luckhurst to her greyhounds.

Professor Morris referred to a peer-reviewed report which he had presented at the most recent international animal sports anti doping conference in which he had suggested that as a result of more stringent controls on horse meat introduced by governments, there may be some supply chain diversion from category 2 to category 3 Animal By-Products, this being supported in general by the findings of the Disciplinary Committee. Thus, while category 3 meat should not have been the source of the pentobarbital, the Committee thought that there was a strong possibility that the meat supplied to Miss Luckhurst had been contaminated in this case.

While the Committee had found Miss Luckhurst in breach of the strict liability rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(b) and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing, the GBGB had earlier withdrawn the alleged breach of rule 174

(i)(a) having concluded that she had taken all reasonable precautions regarding her dogs' feeding regime. Accordingly, as suggested by Mr Gibson for the Board, the Disciplinary Committee took no further action.

2. Towcester Stadium – FLYING DISCOVERY – Professional Trainer Mr S Rayner

Professional Trainer Stephen Rayner 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 FLYING DISCOVERY at Towcester Stadium 27 May 2017 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of benzoylecgonine (a metabolite of cocaine).

Mr Rayner was accompanied by his friend Mark Blasey. Chris Page, racing manager of Towcester Stadium, apologised for his non-attendance. Paula Clare, stipendiary steward, Robbie Steward, sampling steward and Professor Tim Morris, independent scientific adviser were in attendance.

Professor Morris gave evidence that cocaine and benzoylecgonine affect dogs by stimulating the brain. Other studies have reported a significant reduction in heart function in dogs given cocaine. As such it was the opinion of Professor Morris that cocaine and benzoylecgonine, as stimulants of the nervous system, were substances which by their nature could affect the performance of a greyhound or prejudice its welfare.

Mr Rayner stressed that he had not administered cocaine, or its metabolite benzoylecgonine, or knowingly allowed any accidental exposure to these substances. There were no unusual betting patterns and the performance of FLYING DISCOVERY in the race in question was not untypical

There was considerable discussion with Professor Morris about the testing regime for the positive sample with particular reference to the "negative" result for a routine hair sample that had been taken, subsequent to the urine sample.

In testing hair, it is important to understand the basis of an analytical finding of a drug in a hair sample. Did it only arise from an external exposure of the hair with resultant incorporation in the sweat lining the hair? Alternatively, did it arise from an administration to the animal, and with resultant incorporation in both the sweat lining the hair and the central solid core of the hair. Therefore, the hair is washed to exclude external contamination as the sole source of the analytical finding and there is a defined percentage drug level remaining in the wash relative to the complementary analytical findings in the centre of the hair shaft that is required not be exceeded for reporting the hair sample as a "positive".

Whilst this defined percentage drug level remaining in the wash was exceeded in this case, Professor Morris interpreted these test results as supporting the previously confirmed finding in urine, in that cocaine had been through the dog and importantly had metabolised to benzoylecgonine and also two other metabolites of cocaine, with the subsequent incorporation of both cocaine and its metabolites into both the outer sweat layers and centre of the hair shaft.

The confirmed finding in urine, and supportive analytical detection in hair could have been as a result of the same event of the dog being handled by an individual whose hands carried traces of cocaine. It was unlikely that merely transiently stroking the dog would lead to this result and it was also unlikely that the urine in the dog's sample could have been the subject of direct cross-contamination.

The Committee then had a telephone conference call with Mr Ivan Cronin who had been a licensed kennelhand to Mr Rayner for a brief period during which the positive test had been given by FLYING DISCOVERY and who had in fact accompanied Mr Rayner to Towcester Stadium on the race morning in question. While Mr Cronin denied using recreational drugs at the time of the positive test he admitted that he had used them in the recent past suggesting that his use had ceased some months before the positive test. He denied both administration and contamination of the dog.

When Mr Rayner had employed Mr Cronin as licensed kennelhand, the Committee noted that Mr Rayner had failed to take up references from at least 2 well known trainers for whom Mr Cronin had previously worked. Mr Rayner stated that subsequent to the positive test he had been told by a previous employer of Mr Cronin that he had been a user of recreational drugs.

There was a long discussion about paddock security at Towcester and it emerged that the kennel of FLYING DISCOVERY had been unlocked for a period after the dog had returned post-race but before being tested. This, and the unique layout of Towcester which results in a number of individuals from the track and owners having access to greyhounds post-race (but before testing), increases the possibility of a breach of security.

The Committee were unable to conclude what was the cause of the exposure to cocaine but the dog had been in the charge of Mr Rayner throughout the relevant period. Accordingly, they considered that in failing to take up references for Mr Cronin and not securing the kennel door post-race Mr Rayner had increased the likelihood of such exposure occurring.

While the Committee were conscious of Mr Rayner's excellent rehoming record and the first-class references including that of Mr Chris Page the Towcester racing manager, they were concerned by two previous rule breaches, one of which involved "internet" sourced suppressants.

The Committee concluded that there had not been a deliberate administration by Mr Rayner but that his actions had increased the chances of this sort of breach occurring. He had been a credible witness, but this was a serious breach and there was no place for drugs in the sport. The Disciplinary 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 severely reprimanded and fined £2,000.