

Important Notice for Harness and Thoroughbred Trainers and Veterinarians regarding the detection of the corticosteroid drug dexamethasone

Harness and Thoroughbred Trainers and Veterinarians are advised that the urine screening limit applied for the corticosteroid drug dexamethasone changed in Western Australia on 1 May 2015 and this will result in a longer detection time for the drug.

The information contained within does not constitute the giving of advice to Trainers with respect to the use of any product to which screening limits apply.

Background

As of 1 May 2015, the official screening limit applied for dexamethasone in urine was amended within the RWAA Thoroughbred and Harness Rules of Racing in order to adopt the new International Screening Limit (ISL) for dexamethasone of 0.2 ng/mL in urine.

As this new screening limit is lower than the screening limit previously applied for dexamethasone by Australian laboratories this will have important implications for the detection of dexamethasone following its administration to racehorses and will lead to a prolongation of detection times for this corticosteroid drug.

By way of an example, the ISL was applied to the analysis of samples collected during an administration trial involving a short-acting dexamethasone preparation (dexamethasone sodium phosphate) given intravenously and conducted as part of the Equine Therapeutics Research Australia (ETRA) project and published by the Rural Industries Research Development Corporation (RIRDC).

The published ETRA data sheet for dexamethasone can be found at this link, <https://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/publications/13-040.pdf> and is valid for the lowered ISL to be applied by the Australian racing laboratories.

Therefore, Veterinarians are advised that recommended withdrawal periods for treatment with dexamethasone sodium phosphate (for example, in products including *Colvasone*, *Dexadreson*, *Dexapent*, *Dexason*, *Dexol-5*, *Dexone-5*) must be based on the new ETRA data sheet.

It is important to note that a withdrawal (or withholding) period is not the same as a detection period. Any drug detection period specified within any publication is for the guidance of veterinarians to estimate an appropriate withholding time, based on the particular circumstances of drug administration, and this should include the addition of a suitable safety margin to account for individual variation.

There have been no studies conducted on the detection of long-acting forms of injectable dexamethasone in relation to the ISL, and due to their long and unpredictable excretion, their use in racehorses should be avoided.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

This information is for the guidance of equine veterinarians to assist in determining an appropriate withholding time from competition. If you are not an equine veterinarian, you must not rely on or attempt to interpret, any information contained in this publication. You should seek the advice of an equine veterinarian before administering a therapeutic drug to a horse and before making decisions about withholding time in your particular circumstances. The administration study publication referred to summarises the results of a study in which a single dose of a particular formulation of the drug was administered using a particular method to a limited number of horses of a particular weight. Formulation differences exist between drugs of different companies and may also affect the pharmacokinetics of the drug. Therefore, any summary is not, and should not be regarded as, advice regarding the period of detection in urine in any particular case. The actual period of detection will depend on the particular circumstances of each instance of drug administration.

Date of effect and publication of notice: 1 May, 2015.
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