



RACING AND WAGERING WESTERN AUSTRALIA

12th August, 2021

NOTICE TO INDUSTRY

SCREENING LIMITS

In a recent determination by the Racing Penalties Appeal Tribunal (RPAT) relating to the detection of dexamethasone in a Standardbred racehorse, it was held that the 2015 notice advising Trainers and Veterinarians that the screening limit for the corticosteroid drug dexamethasone was changing, resulting in a longer detection time, constituted the giving of advice to Trainers and Veterinarians.

That document has been reviewed and updated to prevent any potential confusion and make clear that the information contained was not intended to and does not constitute the giving of advice to Trainers with respect to the use of any product to which screening limits apply.

Given the variable factors involved where therapeutic treatments are applied to any racing animal, a Trainer cannot rely solely on such notice for the purpose of determining appropriate treatment withholding periods for any individual animal prior to competition.

Purpose of screening limits

Screening limits were published for the purpose of objectivity, transparency and international harmonisation for certain commonly used therapeutic substances so that increased sensitivity of analysis, as technology improved, did not result in a “moving of the goal posts” with the ability to detect the same therapeutic substance at lower levels.

The publication of a screening limit, or therapeutic medication detection times arising from limited administration studies, does not replace the need for trainers to obtain specific professional veterinary advice with respect to the treatment of their animals to ensure they comply with the obligations to present runners free of any prohibited substances.

Accordingly, no reliance can be placed on screening limits notices for administrations that lead to the detection of a prohibited substance on race day as a factor in mitigation on the grounds of such notices constituting advice to trainers or vets.

The publication of screening limits serves merely as general information and does not replace specific veterinary advice for the treatment of horses engaged to race. They also do not diminish the important onus on trainers to present horses free of such therapeutic substances or the objective seriousness of such detections when they arise on ground so welfare and perceptions of integrity in racing.

Trainers and Veterinarians are further advised that any such advice provided or received in relation to appropriate withholding periods for therapeutic medications prior to competition should always be conservative in nature and make allowance for individual variations between animals, and factor into account variable treatment dose rates and dose schedules.

Screening limits do not affect liability

Consistent with the overarching principles regarding screening limits:

- The implementation of screening limits in racing is not intended and does not operate to mean that for the purpose of the Rules of Racing the therapeutic substance only becomes a prohibited substance if and when the screening limit is exceeded.

- It shall not be a defence to any charge relating to the presentation of a racing animal with a prohibited substance present that the initial screening test should have been below the screening limit for the therapeutic substance in question.
- In making any decision regarding the administration of a prohibited substance to a horse that is entered to race, participants are reminded of their responsibility in undertaking the appropriate level of due diligence and risk analysis in researching the available information, including the seeking of veterinary advice and applying adequate safety margins to account for biological variability.
- A “detection time” is not the same as a “withdrawal time”. A suitable safety margin dependent upon various factors including, but not limited to dose, length of treatment, route of administration and other relevant factors including allowance for biological variation between animals must be considered when calculating withdrawal times.
- To ensure the rules of racing are not breached, in adopting withdrawal times a conservative approach should be taken and include specific veterinary advice in that regard.
- Where in doubt, participants and Veterinarians should contact the RWWA Veterinary department to ensure any proposed treatments are appropriate given the Rules of Racing.

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