

Submission
No 79

**INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND WELFARE AND
INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

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Partially
Confidential

PROBLEMS WITH SWABBING IN N.S.W.

Most of this information was collected when I was with GRNSW. Please check that it is still valid today.

Due to the sensitivity of modern urine analysis innocent people on medication for asthma, heart disease and chronic pain are being penalised because their dogs test positive to these medications at levels that would not be considered performance enhancing. Meanwhile the “smarties” can get away with systematic cheating on a regular basis.

One of the joys of greyhound training is the interaction between dog and trainer. This is now affected by the fear that contact could result in a positive swab. A prerace pat by a member of the public who is a cocaine user could result in a positive urine test with a loss of reputation and livelihood for the trainer, (cocaine is readily absorbed through the skin) as well as abuse and threats from social media. (Azzopardi)

The recording of these positives leads the public to believe that greyhound racing is full of dopers

What happens when drug detection becomes so sensitive that we are dealing in picograms of compound per ml? (1,000 times more sensitive)

Meanwhile due to an absurd concentration on race day swabbing and a pitiful neglect of out of competition swabbing those in the know are using variations of the doping regime used so effectively by Lance Armstrong, namely the use of EPO, testosterone and hydrocortisone.

EPO

Normal doses are eliminated in 24 -48 hours but by using 20% of the dose 2 or 3 times in a week the detection time is reduced to 4.8 – 9.6 hours from injection.

EPO in urine is highly labile and does not store well. Proteases in urine, or produced by microorganisms in urine, break it down. Samples should be put on ice and transported to the lab as soon as possible. Sending samples overseas for confirmation is, in my opinion, ill advised.

Some work has been done on the use of coatings in the swab containers to inhibit protease and microbial decomposition. (Could be added to rinse solution)

The French Agency For The Fight Against Doping (AFLD) has a new test for use against microdosing. Validation by WADA is expected in 2020.

Before there was a reliable urine test for EPO at first was only detected by looking for changes in the red cell count. This has led to the incorrect assumption that blood is the best sample to take for the detection of EPO.

Use of blood for analysis is more expensive, has a lower period of detection time (drug metabolites can sit in the bladder for hours after they have been cleared from the blood) and is more difficult (metabolites may be bound to proteins in the blood and destroyed by enzymes in the blood)

We need out of competition swabbing and local laboratories

TESTOSTERONE

The belief that testosterone is detectable for days after administration is based on excretion times for injectable testosterone namely testosterone propionate. Today we have other methods of application namely nasal sprays, skin patches and creams that narrow the detection time markedly.

HYDROCORTISONE

Hydrocortisone is naturally produced in the body. If taken in high doses it removes pain, reduces fatigue and gives a feeling of wellbeing.

There is argument as to the use of corticosteroids between groups in WADA but if anyone doubts its effectiveness as a performance enhancing substance have a good look at articles written in cycling blogs and articles e.g. Velo News.

Dog trainers have been found to have used this drug but it is rarely detected in the lab or if it is it is ignored because of the difficulty of proving that it is not endogenous. (camilleri). I find it sad that an honest trainer can lose prize money ,reputation and be fined for a few nanograms per ml of meloxicam she is taking for her own pain and a group of trainers suffer the same for an anti-inflammatory drug in the meat fed to the dogs while other trainers could give hydrocortisone which does the same and they get off.

CARBON ISOTOPE RATIO MASS SPECTROMETRY

This technique has been used to detect testosterone that has been administered to human athletes. It works on the principle that the ratio of the different isotopes of carbon (c12 and c13) in the administered drug is different to the ratio of isotopes found in the precursors of the testosterone produced naturally in the body. There is work proceeding at present on the detection of hydrocortisone.

If one seeks article on this subject Adam T Cawley of The Australian Racing Forensic Laboratory is often cited. Why did we go to Melbourne?

SOLUTIONS

1. Set acceptable limits for drugs used by trainers for their own health. I have talked to vets and they all are worried that no experiments have been done to determine at what level drugs may have an effect. Financially these experiments are beyond the scope of the Greyhound Industry and could not be done for all drugs. Meanwhile trainer's reputation and livelihood are sacrificed. Vets have said to me that they would rather a trainer suffer than have a dog's welfare affected by doping. All well and good until we have a suicide. Greyhound vets should bite the bullet and consider the trainers as well as the dog and work towards a system that is fair.

People who are reluctant to set levels because no experiments have been carried out are quite willing to penalise dog trainers for cobalt positives but there is no evidence, to my knowledge, that proves cobalt is performance enhancing in dogs.

2. Decrease emphasis on In Competition swabbing and markedly increase Out of Competition swabbing.

This may require the introduction of a new trainer's agreement allowing steward entry at all hours if not their licence may be revoked.

When the stewards are at a property take samples from many dogs not only the ones that are in coming races.

It is essential for analysis of EPO that samples are put on ice and taken straight to the lab.

To me it is ridiculous that samples are sent to Bathurst then to Melbourne.

To send a sample of EPO positive urine to England for confirmation is crazy, there should be a ready protocol in place for the detection and confirmation of EPO. After this fiasco do the people in charge now have a list of labs that can confirm the result?

3. Return the analysis to Sydney. When I was at GRNSW (about 6 years ago) the Sydney lab had had a 20 million dollar upgrade, the equipment was state of the art and they could get a result from 5ml of urine. Now you have problems with leaking containers and complaints that your agents are not collecting enough urine. People who were highly capable when the samples were going to Sydney are now being admonished for inadequate sampling.

For the detection of EPO you need to get to the lab as quickly as possible

- 4 .CIR MS (MOST IMPORTANT)

Another reason to return to Sydney is for Adam Cawley and his expertise in Carbon Isotope Ratio, Mass Spectrometry (assuming that he is still there). You need to know what you need to do to initiate this analysis.

I cannot express how important it is to be able to eliminate the use of exogenous testosterone and cortisone from the dopers list of available methods.

If you begin to use this method be sure to insist that trainers cannot use exogenous hormones before you begin testing otherwise they will argue that the hormone levels are below those you have set so they are not guilty.

- 5 Employ an officer to keep an eye on what drugs are currently in use in human doping and to act to liaise with analysts. It is amazing what you learn by looking up drug doping on the internet. How complex and profitable it can be. (eg epitestosterone creams).In my

experience vets in practice do not have much of an idea as to what is involved in doping and their advice on doping should not be relied upon. (e.g. the testosterone in bitches debacle where vets set level that, in my opinion, were scientifically incorrect resulting in trainers losing thousands of dollars). I was the same until I joined GRNSW and it took 2 years of afterhours study to feel competent to offer an opinion on drug analysis. You need someone to concentrate on the changes going on. This officer could keep up to date on the result of human cases of doping and on the legal arguments submitted by the defence so they can help in the prosecution of local cases.

The officer could keep track of the use of peptides, growth hormones and other agents that may be used by dopers in the future.

- 6 EPO is rapidly broken down in urine. It is possible to coat the sample containers with chemicals or to add chemicals to the rinse agent that slow the decomposition.

BOLDENONE

Trainers have been penalised for several nanograms per ml of boldenone. It has been proven in man, cattle, swine and various insects that animals can produce boldenone endogenously if fed certain phytosterols in their diet. Microorganisms in the urine sample can also complete this transformation e.g. *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) does not penalise athletes if the level is below 5ngm/ml, if between 5 and 10 it uses carbon isotope ratio to find if it is endogenous and if it is above 15 ngm/ml the athlete is charged.

In my opinion this logic should be applied to greyhound racing.

BROKEN HOCKS

When NSW went from turf to loam tracks there appeared to me, as a track vet, that toe injuries showed a marked decrease but the incidence of broken hocks increased. (check records to verify this observation). I put this down to a lack of purchase of the dog's feet on the track. I think the loam should be soft enough to allow the dog's foot to penetrate into the loam to gain purchase. Rolling the track to enable records to be broken will in my opinion lead to an increase in broken hocks. See Wentworth Park)

The use of heavy tractors with narrow tyres on the track gives hard areas with no give. Small tractors with wide soft tyres should be used.

It was also an observation that there were less broken hocks on straight tracks (check the figures).

I would advise an increase in straight track racing. Qualifying races with a final 3-4 days later with the possibility of 10 dogs per race should appeal to the TAB and would eliminate the need for the dogs to trial between races to maintain fitness. Every run would give the possibility of prize money. Cameras that followed the action would make this even more interesting.