11 May 2021

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**STEFANO CASSAR**

**Date of hearing:** 15 April 2021

**Panel:** Judge John Bowman (Chairperson) and Dr Andrew Gould.

**Appearances:** Mr Marwan El-Asmar appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr David Graham represented Mr Stefano Cassar.

**Charge:** Greyhounds Australasia Rule (“GAR”) 83(2) states:

The owner, trainer or person in charge of a greyhound-

1. nominated to compete in an Event;
2. presented for a satisfactory, weight or whelping trial or such other trial as provided for pursuant to these Rules; or
3. presented for any test or examination for the purpose of a period of incapacitation or prohibition being varied or revoked

shall present the greyhound free of any prohibited substance.

**Particulars of charge:** 1. You are, and were at all relevant times, a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.

2. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound “Deep Dive”.

3. “Deep Dive” was nominated to compete in, Race 1, EVERY RACE LIVE ON THE WATCHDOG APP, Maiden, conducted by the Warrnambool Greyhound Racing Club at Warrnambool on 10 September 2020 (**the Event**).

4. On 10 September 2020, you presented “Deep Dive” at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:

1. A post-race sample of blood was taken from “Deep Dive” at the Event (**the Sample**);
2. Meloxicam was detected in the Sample.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Stefano Cassar, you have pleaded “guilty” to a breach of Greyhounds Australasia Rule (“GAR”) 83(2). Mr David Graham represented and assisted you in the hearing before us.

The charge relates to a post-race blood sample taken from “Deep Dive”, a greyhound trained by you, following its run in Race 1 at Warrnambool on 10 September 2020. Deep Dive won the race. The blood sample tested positive to Meloxicam, a prohibited substance. You had been feeding the dog knackery meat. The Stewards consider that to be the most likely cause of the positive return and we agree.

Your situation is that you are a 38 year old man who has been involved in the industry for approximately nine years and have been registered as a public trainer since 30 June 2016. Your wife is also involved in the industry as a licensed trainer. Each of you is a hobby trainer, you being a mechanical engineer and she being a teacher. The number of dogs you train between you varies. It has been four dogs, but is seven at the moment.

You have a very good record, with only one minor infringement concerning weight variation. We treat you as having a virtually unblemished record for present purposes.

The problems associated with knackery meat are well known and those in the industry have been warned to avoid it. It received considerable attention in 2016, when the industry was put on alert in very clear terms. That has been followed up in more recent times. Participants should be well and truly aware of the risks. We appreciate that knackery meat is considerably cheaper, and that seems to have played a role in your thinking, but the risks associated with its use are well known.

As we know, Meloxicam can enhance performance by reducing pain levels. It has the potential to provide an unfair advantage. For this reason, its use is prohibited.

Mr Graham directed our attention to material which, in his submission, indicated that Meloxicam may be present in all meat and not just knackery meat. We thank him for his research and assistance in that regard, but it is really a matter for expert evidence and interpretation of the material.

In any event, the bottom line is that Meloxicam is a prohibited substance and industry participants have been alerted to the risks associated with knackery meat for some years.

In all the circumstances, you are fined the sum of $1,500, with $500 of that being suspended for a period of 12 months. It will be payable if you breach this Rule again during that period.

In addition, Deep Dive is disqualified from Race 1 at Warragul on 10 September 2020 and the prizemoney which it received is to be refunded to Greyhound Racing Victoria.

Kathleen Scully
Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal