18 February 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**ROSS LYONS**

**Date of hearing:** 4 February 2025

**Date of Decision:** 4 February 2025

**Panel:** Judge Kathryn Kings (Deputy Chairperson) and Mr Greg Childs.

**Appearances:** Mr Anthony Pearce appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Ross Lyons represented himself.

**Charge:** Greyhounds Australasia Rule (“GAR”) 141(1) states:

 (1) The owner, trainer or other person in charge of a greyhound:

(a) nominated to compete in an Event;

(b) presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or

(c) presented for any test or examination for the purpose of a stand-down period being varied or revoked,

 must 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 “Uncle Rosco”.

3. Uncle Rosco was nominated to compete in Race 10, SPORTSBET SAME RACE MULTI, Grade 5, conducted by the Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club at Ballarat on 3 April 2024 (the Event).

4. On 3 April 2024, you presented Uncle Rosco at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:

(a) A pre-race sample of urine was taken from Uncle Rosco at the Event (the Sample);

(b) Sotalol was detected in the Sample.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Ross Lyons is a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) and is bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules (GAR). He has been licensed for approximately seven years.

Mr Lyons has been charged under GAR 141(1), a presentation offence. Mr Lyons is the trainer of the greyhound, “Uncle Rosco”, who was nominated to compete in Race 10 at Ballarat on 3 April 2024. Uncle Rosco was presented at the event not free of a prohibited substance, given that a pre-race sample of urine was taken from the greyhound at the event and sotalol was detected in the sample.

Mr Lyons has pleaded guilty to the charge.

In a report dated 2 July 2024, GRV Chief Veterinarian, Dr Steven Karamatic, confirmed that sotalol is a prohibited substance as defined by the GARs and is placed in the category “stimulants depressants and other prohibited substances” of the GRV Penalty Guidelines. He said that there were currently no Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority registered products that contain sotalol. There are 24 Therapeutic Goods Administration Human that contain sotalol. All are prescription only medications.

Dr Karamatic said that sotalol is capable of affecting the condition and performance of a greyhound, with any effect on performance more likely to be negative by reducing cardiac output.

Dr Karamatic noted that there were warnings provided to the industry by GRV’s Food and Supplements Guidelines, published in 2016, which alerted participants to the potential risks of inadvertent swabs from the use of personal medications and gives guidance to participants to minimise the risks. Similar warnings were provided in the July 2020 edition of Greyhound Monthly Review. In 2021, a further Notice was published by GRV warning of increased penalties regarding a number of matters, including personal medications. The Notice specifically referred to insufficient hygiene precautions – for example, not wearing gloves whilst handling food and/or failing to wash hands after taking medication as they are known risks for contamination.

During the kennel inspection, Mr Lyons produced personal medication, Sotalol (APX) tablets that contain sotalol, which he takes morning and night. Mr Lyons said that at approximately 6.30am he takes one tablet with his coffee and then at approximately 7.00am he makes up the morning feeds for the greyhounds. He did not wear gloves when preparing the feeds, nor did he wash his hands after taking his medication. Mr Lyons said that now he wears gloves when preparing the feeds for the dogs and washes his hands, with hand washing detergent, after taking his medication.

In imposing a penalty, we take into account Mr Lyons’ plea of guilty, his cooperation with the Stewards, his attempts to prevent further positive swabs and the importance of reinforcing specific and general deterrence. We note that this is Mr Lyons’ first offence of this kind. We also acknowledge the importance of maintaining a level playing field by having a drug free industry. We take into account penalties in recent like cases as a guide.

In all the circumstances, we impose a penalty of three months suspension, fully suspended for 24 months pending no further relevant offences during that time and a fine of $300.

In addition, Uncle Rosco is disqualified from Race 10 at Ballarat on 3 April 2024 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Kathleen Scully

Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal