26 February 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**MARK STRAHAN**

**Date of hearing:** 30 January 2025

**Date of Decision:** 30 January 2025

**Panel:** Judge Kathryn Kings (Deputy Chairperson) and Ms Heidi Keighran.

**Appearances:** Ms Yana Podolskaya appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Mark Strahan 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 “Yum Cha Jack”.

3. Yum Cha Jack was nominated to compete in Race 9, PINK DIAMOND CHALLENGER SPRINT HT1 (VICGREYS), Grade 5 Heat, conducted by the Warragul Greyhound Racing Club at Warragul on 6 June 2024 (the Event).

4. On 6 June 2024, you presented Yum Cha Jack at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:

(a) A post-race sample of urine was taken from Yum Cha Jack at the Event (the Sample);

(b) Metformin was detected in the Sample.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Mark Strahan is a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) and bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules (“GARs”). He has been licensed for approximately 15 years.

Mr Strahan has been charged with breaching GAR 141(1), a presentation charge. Mr Strahan is the trainer of the greyhound, “Yum Cha Jack”, who was nominated to compete in Race 9 at Warragul on 6 June 2024. On 6 June 2024, Yum Cha Jack was presented at the event not free of a prohibited substance given that a post-race sample of urine was taken at the event detected the prohibited substance, metformin.

Mr Strahan pleaded guilty to the charge.

In a report dated 25 August 2024, GRV Chief Veterinarian, Dr Steven Karamatic, confirmed that metformin is a prohibited substance as defined by the GARs and is capable of, at any time, affecting the endocrine system. He said that there were currently no Australian Pesticides or Veterinary Medicines Authority registered products that contain metformin. There are human therapeutic goods that contain metformin. All are prescription only medications.

Dr Karamatic said that metformin is capable of affecting the condition and performance of a greyhound, with any effect more likely to be negative, such as by reducing energy. Although, increasing the amount of glucose stored in muscle cells it could have a positive effect on performance. Dr Karamatic noted the warnings provided to the industry by GRV’s Food and Supplements Guidelines published in August 2016, which alerted participants to the potential risks of inadvertent swabs from the use of medications and gives some guidance to minimise the risks, and similar warnings were provided in the July 2020 edition of the Greyhound Monthly Review.

During the kennel inspection, Mr Strahan produced personal medication APX-Metformin 500 which contains metformin as the active ingredient with 500mg per tablet. His doctor prescribed the medication one tablet twice per day, with or after food, as directed.

Mr Strahan advised that he keeps his medication in the house. Since taking the medication, he washes his hands and wears gloves before preparing the food for his greyhounds’. Dr Karamatic said despite the precautions taken, personal contamination is the likely source of this positive sample, although other sources could not be ruled out. Mr Strahan said he now wears stronger gloves when preparing and feeding his dogs, and he now wears long sleeved tops. He washes his hands with dishwashing liquid and hot water, dries his hands before he puts on his gloves. He is trying to improve his diet so that he no longer requires medication for his diabetes.

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

In all the circumstances, we impose a penalty of a fine of $500.

In addition, Yum Cha Jack is disqualified from Race 9 at Warragul on 6 June 2024 and the finishing order is amended accordingly. Further, pursuant to GAR 141(1)(5)(b), the greyhound is also disqualified from Race 11 at Shepparton on 15 June 2024 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Kathleen Scully

Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal