2 June 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**BILLY COWCHER**

**Date of hearing:** 29 May 2025

**Date of decision:** 29 May 2025

**Panel:** Judge Kathryn Kings (Deputy Chairperson) and Mr Josh Bornstein.

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

Mr Billy Cowcher represented himself.

**Charge:**

Greyhounds Australasia Rule 141(1) reads as follows:

**Rule 141 Greyhound to be free of prohibited substances**

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

1. *nominated to compete in an Event;*

1. *presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or*

1. *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:**

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.

1. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound *“Pegleg Pete”.*

1. *“Pegleg Pete”* was nominated to compete in Race 4, VALE ROB JONES, Mixed 6/7, conducted by the Shepparton Greyhound Racing Club at Shepparton on 5 August 2024 (**the Event**).

1. On 5 August 2024, you presented *“Pegleg Pete”* at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:
2. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from *“Pegleg Pete”* at the Event (**the Sample**);
3. Gabapentin was detected in the Sample.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

1. Mr Billy Cowcher is a trainer licensed by GRV and is a person bound by the Greyhound Australasia Rules. He has been licensed for approximately 3 years. He has no prior offences.
2. Mr Cowcher was the trainer of Pegleg Pete. Pegleg Pete was nominated to compete in Race 4 conducted at the Shepparton Greyhound Racing Club at Shepparton on 5 August 2024. Mr Cowcher presented Pegleg Pete not free of any prohibited substance. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from Pegleg Pete and Gabapentin was detected in that sample by RASL on 6 August 2024. A referee analysis was conducted by the Racing Science Centre. The Racing Science Centre confirmed the presence of Gabapentin. Gabapentin was not detected in the control sample V817905.
3. Mr Billy Cowcher was charged with a presentation offence under Greyhound Australasia Rule 141(1) on account of presenting Pegleg Pete for an event not free of a prohibited substance.
4. He pleaded guilty to the charge.
5. The Chief Veterinarian of GRV, Dr Steven Karamatic in a report dated 2 October 2024, based his professional opinion on a review of relevant literature, his own expertise, various documents provided including:

RASL ‘s certificate of Analysis V817905;

Queensland Racing Science Certificate of Analysis V817905;

Racing analytical Services Ltd Report;

The Swab Irregularity Inspection report V817905

Photographs of the kennel inspection; and

Statement of Mr Max Hayden-Evans, GRV Senior Steward.

1. Dr Karamatic stated that Gabapentin is a prohibited substance as defined by the Greyhound Australasia Rules. It is placed in the category Therapeutic Substances of the Penalty Guidelines. There were no products found during the kennel inspection that were likely to contain Gabapentin. Unfit for human consumption meat was fed to the greyhound and could be a potential source of exposure the Gabapentin. Treating records reviewed did not detail the use of Gabapentin. Side effects of Gabapentin include sedation and ataxia. The industry has been warned about the feeding of knackery meat to greyhounds on a number of occasions.
2. Gabapentin is capable of affecting the condition and performance of a greyhound and any effect on performance would be dose dependant. At low doses, it could produce an artificial pain free state and at high doses, it could have a negative effect causing sedation and ataxia.
3. In imposing a penalty, we have taken into account Mr Cowcher’s guilty plea; steps taken by him to ensure that there will be no recurrence by changing the diet of the greyhounds; his cooperation with the Stewards and the importance of general and specific deterrence. We take into account his relatively short time in the industry. We acknowledge the importance of maintaining a level playing field by having a dug free industry. In addition, we take into account the Stewards’ submissions in relation to penalty.
4. In all the circumstances, we impose a penalty of $2,000 with $1,500 suspended for a period of 24 months pending no further breach of the Rules regarding prohibited substances for that period.
5. In addition, Pegleg Pete is disqualified from Race 4 at Shepparton on 5 August 2024 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Mark Howard

Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal