2 June 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**BRENDAN PURSELL**

**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 Brendan Pursell 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;*
2. *presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or*
3. *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 Greyhound Australasia Rules.
2. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound *“Moonlight Annie”.*
3. *“Moonlight Annie”* was nominated to compete in Race 9, ARMON BOY AT STUD, Mixed 6/7, conducted by The Meadows Greyhound Racing Association at The Meadows on 3 July 2024 (**the Event**).
4. On 3 July 2024, you presented *“Moonlight Annie”* at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:
5. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from *“Moonlight Annie”* at the Event (**the Sample**);
6. Gabapentin was detected in the Sample.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

1. Mr Brendan Pursell is a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) and a person bound by the Greyhound Australasia Rules (“GAR”). He has been a licensed trainer for approximately 12 years.
2. Mr Pursell was the trainer of “Moonlight Annie”. Moonlight Annie was nominated to compete in Race 9 at The Meadows on 3 July 2024. On that date, Mr Pursell presented Moonlight Annie not free of any prohibited substance. A pre-race urine sample tested by Racing Analytical Services Limited (“RASL”) revealed the presence of Gabapentin. A referee analysis was conducted by the Racing Science Centre (“RSC”) in Queensland which confirmed the RASL finding. On 22 August 2024, RSC forwarded the certificate of analysis reporting the presence of gabapentin in the urine sample.
3. Mr Pursell was charged with a presentation offence under GAR 141(1).
4. Mr Pursell pleaded guilty to the charge.
5. The Chief Veterinarian of GRV, Dr Steven Karamatic, in a report dated 27 August 2024, stated that Gabapentin is a prohibited substance as defined by the GAR and is capable of affecting the condition or performance of a greyhound. The effect on performance would be dose dependant. At low doses, it could be positive by producing an artificial pain free state and at high doses, it could have a negative effect causing sedation and ataxia.
6. Gabapentin tablets were found at the kennel, prescribed for another greyhound. That greyhound had not taken the medication at the relevant time. Gabapentin has not been used on any dog for some time. The evidence was that an employee takes Gabapentin daily but does not bring her medication to the property.
7. That employee takes the medication at home between 7:00pm and 8:00pm. She cleans the yards and runs, organises the bedding, cleans the kennels, sweeping and mopping them. She grooms the greyhounds, but does not wear gloves during any of these practices. She returns the greyhounds to the yards after they have been worked by Mr Pursell. She does not make up the feeds for the greyhounds. She puts the bowls containing the feeds under each dog’s head, washes the bowls, waters and helps working the dog.
8. When making up the feeds and feeding the dogs, staff wear gloves. Employees only prepare meat very rarely and only when Mr Pursell is not present. Mr Pursell feeds to the greyhounds kangaroo meat from a pet shop in Geelong. He does not feed human consumption meat to a greyhound prior to a race.
9. In imposing a penalty, we have taken into account Mr Pursell’s guilty plea, his cooperation with the Stewards and the importance of general and specific deterrence. We take into account his 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.
10. In all the circumstances, we impose a penalty of $2,000 with $1,000 suspended for a period of 18 months.
11. In addition, Moonlight Annie is disqualified from Race 9 at The Meadows on 3 July 2024 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Paige Macdonald

A/Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal