23 June 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**MARTIN TAYLOR**

**Date of hearings:** 2 April 2025 and 14 May 2025

**Date of decision:** 11 June 2025

**Panel:** Judge Kathryn Kings (Deputy Chairperson) and Dr Andrew Gould.

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

Mr Robert Camilleri represented Mr Martin Taylor.

**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 *“Lamont Bale”.*

1. *“Lamont Bale”* was nominated to compete in Race 8, CABINET CONNECTIONS (275+RANK), Mixed 4/5, conducted by the Sale Greyhound Racing Club at Sale on 29 February 2024 (**the Event**).

1. On 29 February 2024, you presented *“Lamont Bale”* at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:
2. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from *“Lamont Bale”* at the Event (**the Sample**);
3. Caffeine, Theophylline, Paraxanthine and Theobromine were detected in the Sample.

 **Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

1. Mr Martin Taylor was a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) and bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules (GAR). He has been in the industry for approximately 50 years.
2. Mr Taylor has been charged with breaching GAR 141(1), a presentation charge. Mr Taylor is the trainer of the greyhound “Lamont Bale”, which was nominated to compete in Race 8 conducted at the Sale Greyhound Racing Club on 29 February 2024. Lamont Bale was presented at the event not free of a prohibited substance, given that a pre-race sample of urine was taken at the event. This detected the prohibited substance, Caffeine and its metabolites Theophylline, Paraxanthine, and Theobromine in the sample.
3. Mr Taylor pleaded guilty to the charge. Mr Taylor is no longer licensed.
4. In a report dated 29 May 2024, GRV Chief Veterinarian, Dr Steven Karamatic, confirmed that the prohibited substance Caffeine and its metabolites (Theophylline, Paraxanthine and Theobromine) were present in the sample V818718.  Further, Caffeine and its metabolites are prohibited substances as defined by the GAR. He reported that no products were produced during the kennel inspection that would be expected to contain either caffeine or its metabolites. Treatment records did not detail the administration of products containing either caffeine or its metabolites.
5. Dr Karamatic said that Caffeine and its metabolites are capable of affecting the condition, behaviour and performance of a greyhound, including by having a stimulant effect.
6. 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 positive swabs resulting from the feeding of coffee, chocolate and liquids, and supplements provided by Health Food shops. Similar warnings were provided in the July 2020 edition of the Greyhound Monthly Review.
7. During the kennel inspection, conducted by Mr Bradley Martin of GRV, Mr Martin reported that Mr Taylor did identify the substance, but could not explain how caffeine would come into contact with Lamont Bale. Further, if it came into contact with Lamont Bale he would expect Lamont Bale would run faster, and not slower, as was the case.
8. Mr Martin reported that there were minimal medications and supplements present. Mr Taylor said drinks were not allowed in the kennels. Mr Martin reported that there was evidence of caffeinated drinks around Mr Taylor’s living quarters. Mr Taylor said that he had restricted sight. Mr Martin noted that Mr Taylor was confused by the meeting and struggled to understand some questions as to how contamination can occur.
9. Dr Karamatic concluded that the detection of caffeine and its metabolites in Sample V818718 confirmed the presence of a prohibited substance caffeine and its metabolites which are capable of affecting the condition, behaviour, or performance of a greyhound, including by having a stimulant effect.
10. At the hearing before the Tribunal on 2 April 2025, Mr Taylor was assisted by Mr Robert Camilleri, a registered trainer who had been in the industry for 50 years. Mr Camilleri told the Tribunal that he has known Mr Taylor for 20 to 30 years and has been aware of the hardships Mr Taylor has endured over the past 4 to 5 years. Mr Taylor had been living with him for a period, but now is living in a caravan nearby. Mr Camilleri has been assisting Mr Taylor with his day to day living. Mr Taylor changes the dogs’ water, as well as hosing down the yards at Mr Camilleri’s kennels. Mr Taylor is in receipt of a disability pension and has a Carer who looks after him. Mr Camilleri talks to his Carer regularly. Two other people work on the property, Mr Taylor cooks breakfast for those working on the property. These duties make Mr Taylor feel useful and assists with his mental health. Mr Camilleri expressed to the Tribunal that he understands that Mr Taylor cannot have contact with the greyhounds. Mr Camilleri assured the Tribunal that Mr Taylor will not be working the dogs, nor will he be feeding them, and that the situation can be managed.
11. Ultimately, the Tribunal is satisfied the that the charge has been proven. Mr Taylor presented Lamont Bale at the event not free of a prohibited substance, namely Caffeine and its metabolites, Theophylline, Paraxanthine and Theobromine.  GAR 141(1) is a rule of strict liability.
12. In imposing a penalty, we take into account Mr Taylor’s guilty plea, his cooperation with the Stewards, and the importance of specific and 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 as a guide. We note that this is not Mr Taylor’s first offence. On 20 February 2024, Mr Taylor received a suspended sentence of 4 months wholly suspended for 12 months and a $300 fine wholly suspended for 12 months as a result of an incident at Warrnambool on 31 July 2023. The Stewards accepted that the current offence does not trigger that prior suspension. In those circumstances, the Stewards sought a 6 month warning off period and a $500 fine, with Lamont Bale being disqualified from Race 8 at the Sale Greyhound Racing Club on 29 February 2024 and the finishing order amended accordingly.
13. The current position is that Mr Taylor is no longer a licensed trainer. However, he committed the offence while licensed. The Tribunal does not consider a “warning off” is an appropriate penalty in these circumstances. The Tribunal orders that any licence held by Mr Taylor be suspended for a period of 6 months. Mr Taylor is prohibited from applying for a renewal or any new licence during the suspension period.
14. Due to the unusual situation and in the interests of fairness the effect of the judgment is that Mr Taylor can work at the property under Mr Camilleri’s supervision, but not otherwise carry out duties inconsistent with the suspension.
15. Lamont Bale is disqualified from Race 8 at the Sale Greyhound Racing Club on 29 February 2024 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Mark Howard

Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal