4 July 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**DONNA PACE**

**Date of hearing:** 19 June 2025

**Date of Decision:** 19 June 2025

**Panel:** Magistrate Peter Reardon (Deputy Chairperson) and Mr Greg Childs.

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

Ms Donna Pace represented herself.

**Charges and Particulars:**

**Charge No. 1 of 3**

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:
2. nominated to compete in an Event;
3. presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or
4. 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 the Charge being**:

1. You were, at all relevant times, a trainer registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.
2. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound “Zipping Mork”
3. “Zipping Mork” was nominated to compete in Race 4, TUDOR ELECTRICAL Grade 5 T3, conducted by the Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club at Ballarat on 22 July 2024 (The Event).
4. On 22 July 2024, you presented “Zipping Mork” at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:
   1. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from *“*Zipping Mork*”* at the Event (**the Sample**);
   2. Codeine and Norcodeine was detected in the Sample.

**Charge No. 2 of 3**

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:
2. nominated to compete in an Event;
3. presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or
4. 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 were, at all relevant times, a trainer registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.
2. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound “Zipping Mork”
3. “Zipping Mork” was nominated to compete in Race 4, TUDOR ELECTRICAL Grade 5 T3, conducted by the Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club at Ballarat on 22 July 2024 (The Event).
4. On 22 Julyl 2024, you presented “Zipping Mork” at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:
   1. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from *“*Zipping Mork*”* at the Event (**the Sample**);
   2. Gabapentin was detected in the Sample.

**Charge No. 3 of 3**

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:
2. nominated to compete in an Event;
3. presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or
4. 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 were, at all relevant times, a trainer registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.
2. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound “Zipping Mork”
3. “Zipping Mork” was nominated to compete in Race 4, TUDOR ELECTRICAL Grade 5 T3, conducted by the Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club at Ballarat on 22 July 2024 (The Event).
4. On 22 July 2024, you presented “Zipping Mork” at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:
   1. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from *“*Zipping Mork*”* at the Event (**the Sample**);
   2. Tranexamic Acid was detected in the Sample.

**Pleas:** Guilty to all charges

**DECISION**

* 1. Ms Donna Pace was at all relevant times a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) and is bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules (“GAR”).
  2. At all relevant times Ms Pace was the trainer of greyhound “Zipping Mork”.
  3. Ms Pace is charged with three offences for breaching GAR 141(1), namely that at all relevant times as the trainer of Zipping Mork, she presented the greyhound at Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club on 22 July 2024 when it was not free of any prohibited substance.
  4. On 22 July 2024, Zipping Mork was entered to compete in Race 4, the Tudor Electrical Grade 5. Zipping Mork raced and finished in sixth place.
  5. A pre-race urine sample was taken from Zipping Mork.
  6. The sample was taken and conducted in accordance with GRV Rules and Swabbing Guidelines. It was sealed and at the conclusion of the sampling process was placed in a locked refrigerator in the Stewards Room. It was taken to Racing Analytical Services Limited (“RASL”) for examination with seals intact.
  7. When analysed, the urine sample was shown to contain Codeine, Norcodeine, Gabapentin, and Tranexamic Acid, all prohibited substances.
  8. On Tuesday, 3 September 2024, Senior Stewards with the Greyhound Racing Integrity Unit (“GRIU”), attended the kennel property of Ms Pace, to inform her of the presence of prohibited substances analysed and taken from Zipping Mork.
  9. Mr Pace, a registered trainer with GRV, husband and training partner of Ms Pace, was present and he agreed to act on behalf of Ms Pace in relation to the inquiry.
  10. Mr Pace advised the Stewards that he predominantly does the majority of the work, training and feeding of the greyhounds on the property. Mr Pace informed the Stewards that one of their Greyhounds named “Reality Mask”, had suffered a tail fracture injury at Geelong Greyhound Racing Club on 16 July 2024. Reality Mask required veterinary services and was prescribed medication for the injury and that medication included the prohibited substances contained in the sample taken from Zipping Mork.
  11. Mr Pace informed the Stewards that he may have inadvertently given Zipping Mork the wrong bowl at feeding time, as these dogs were kennelled next to each other.
  12. The Stewards conducted a kennel inspection and found that all relevant prescribed medications and packaging for the prohibited substances found in Zipping Mork were present.
  13. Photographs of the kennels, supplements, and preparation area were taken. Mr Pace produced treatment records for Zipping Mork and Reality Mask and they were satisfactory.
  14. Zipping Mork was located on the property and Mr Pace informed Stewards that he had transported, kennelled and handled Zipping Mork at Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club on 22 July 2024.
  15. Checks were made with Dr Michael Bell, the usual kennel veterinarian, and he advised the Stewards that Zipping Mork had not sustained any recent injuries and was not on any prescribed medications at the time of the irregularity.
  16. Mr Pace informed the Stewards that he primarily orders and feeds the greyhounds and that there had been no change in the feeding regime. On the day of the race, he had low expectations for Zipping Mork. He had a small bet on his TAB account and would place bets either on course with the TAB on his account.
  17. On Friday 22 November 2024 at the GRV office, Ms Pace was interviewed by Stewards, with her husband, Mr Pace present.
  18. She agreed that she was the trainer of Zipping Mork at the time of the offences and had been so since 19 July 2023.
  19. She admitted that she had received a letter from GRV advising her of the result of the urine sample analysis taken from Zipping Mork and that it was positive for all three offences.
  20. She advised the Stewards that she did not think that Zipping Mork would be competitive that day and that, although she has a TAB Account, she rarely bet.
  21. Ms Pace informed the Stewards that the prohibited substances found in Zipping Mork had been prescribed for Reality Mask, kennelled next door to Zipping Mork.
  22. Her explanation for the drugs located in Zipping Mork’s urine sample was that it was a result of cross-contamination. Reality Mask and Zipping Mork had kennels side by side. Reality Mask does not like to wee in his own kennel and frequently wees into Zipping Mork’s kennel.
  23. Originally she and Mr Pace had thought it was a food bowl mix up, but on reflection they thought it to be Reality Mask weeing into Zipping Mork’s kennel.
  24. She stated that the kennels were colour coordinated, as were the collars, and that there was no medication mix up.
  25. Reality Mask had taken medication for approximately 14 days at the time of the race and it was the weeing that would have caused the positive return.
  26. She had not considered having separate or isolated kennels for greyhounds on medications in order to avoid any potential mix-ups but would do so in future.
  27. Mr Pace admitted that he was responsible for feeding the greyhounds, as Ms Pace had a car accident on 7 September and in July 2024 he was also responsible for the feeding.
  28. GAR 141(1) is a presentation offence. It was read out to her and she stated she was aware and understood the Rule. She finally stated that she could not believe what happened, because they gave the greyhounds nothing.
  29. At the Tribunal today, she has pleaded guilty.
  30. There is no dispute that the urine sample produced the positive results found in Zipping Mork’s urine and hence the Charges.
  31. She was the trainer for the greyhound at the time of the offences.
  32. The evidence relied upon by GRV is contained in the Brief and is not disputed.
  33. We have heard and read the evidence and submissions. Ms Pace is a licensed Trainer and therefore responsible for the welfare, training and racing of Zipping Mork.
  34. General deterrents, and to a lesser extent in this case, specific deterrents are relevant.
  35. Ms Pace has an excellent record and there are no prior matters alleged.
  36. The Tribunal recognises the need to have a level playing field and a drug free environment.
  37. Ms Pace cooperated with the Stewards and has endeavoured to make sure that she complies with the Rules by having colour coordinated food bowls and collars.
  38. Ms Pace agreed with the Stewards’ suggestion that, in certain circumstances, there should be a separation of the greyhounds when as it is necessary to avoid problems of feed bowls being mixed up and other areas of potential cross contamination.
  39. Ms Pace is entitled to a discount because she has pleaded guilty.
  40. The Tribunal agrees with GRV’s submissions that, although there are three Charges, they arise out of the same event and that one penalty is appropriate in this case.
  41. The Tribunal cannot be certain that the positive swabs were a result of cross contamination by Reality Mask urinating in Zipping Mork’s kennel or by feed bowl mix ups. However, it is more likely the result of the food bowl mix up. As Dr Karamatic suggests, that the amount of drug contained in Zipping Mork’s swab makes it unlikely to be from urine cross contamination.
  42. It is clear that Reality Mask was on the medication found in Zipping Mork’s swab and that it was an inadvertent, not a deliberate act.
  43. The Tribunal accepts that the drugs involved were not enhancement drugs.
  44. The Tribunal has also observed the penalties imposed in similar cases, although the Tribunal recognises that each case is unique.
  45. The penalty imposed in these circumstances is that, on the three offences, Ms Pace is fined the aggregate sum of $2,000 with $1,500 suspended for 24 months. Zipping Mork is disqualified from Race 4 from Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club on 22 July 2024, and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Paige Macdonald

A/Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal