

22 July 2024

DECISION

GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA

and

CHRISTINE ITHIER

- Date of hearing:** 27 June 2024
- Date of decision:** 27 June 2024
- Panel:** Judge Kathryn Kings (Deputy Chairperson) and Dr Andrew Gould.
- Appearances:** Mr Timothy Brook appeared on behalf of the Stewards.
Mr Gerard O’Keeffe represented Mrs Christine Ithier.
- 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:**
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 “Sidewinder”.
 3. Sidewinder was nominated to compete in Race 10, LIKE GRVictoria ON FACEBOOK, Grade 5 T3, conducted by the Healesville Greyhound Racing Association at Healesville on 27 October 2023 (the Event).

4. On 27 October 2023, you presented Sidewinder at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:

(a) A pre-race sample of urine was taken from Sidewinder at the Event (the Sample);

(b) Hydrochlorothiazide and Chlorothiazide were detected in the Sample.

Plea: Guilty

DECISION

Mrs Christine Ithier is a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) and a person bound by the Greyhound Australasia Rules (“GAR”). Mrs Ithier has been in the industry for approximately 17 years.

At all relevant times, Mrs Ithier was the trainer of the greyhound, “Sidewinder”. Sidewinder was nominated to compete in Race 10 at Healesville on 27 October 2023. The greyhound was presented to the event not free of a prohibited substance. A pre-race urine sample detected the presence of hydrochlorothiazide and chlorothiazide.

In a report dated 2 January 2024, Dr Steven Karamatic, the Chief Veterinarian at GRV, confirmed that hydrochlorothiazide and chlorothiazide were present in the sample and are prohibited substances. These substances are capable of affecting the cardiovascular system and the urinary system. Dr Karamatic stated that they are not easily placed in a category under GRV’s Penalty Guidelines. However, the category, Therapeutic Substances, seems reasonable given that there was a product produced containing these substances in the personal medication of Mrs Ithier’s husband.

Dr Karamatic said that the substances are in a class which are used in treatment for hypertension and oedema. He said that the substances of the type used are capable of affecting the condition or performance of a greyhound, with any affect more likely to be negative.

In his report, Dr Karamatic referred to the Notices to the Industry published online and forwarded to participants, warning them of possible contamination from the use of personal medication and gives some guidance to minimise those risks.

Mrs Ithier said that she retains primary responsibility for the training, feeding and care of the greyhounds at the property. Her husband has been assisting with the feeding and caring of the greyhounds, as she has been required to assist with her grandchildren. Since receiving a positive sample in January 2023, she and her husband have taken greater precautions to prevent contamination, such as using gloves during food preparation most of the time. Further she said she and her husband attended an appointment with her husband's doctor where they requested a change of medication to prevent a recurrence of sample irregularities.

In imposing a penalty, we take into account Ms Ithier's early guilty, her co-operation 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 also take into account her long history in the industry and the fact that she has had a prior conviction of a very similar nature. We take into account the submissions of the Stewards in relation to penalty.

In all the circumstances, we impose a penalty of a fine of \$1,500 with \$1,000 suspended for 24 months pending no further relevant offence during that time.

In addition, Sidewinder is disqualified from Race 10 at Healesville on 27 October 2023 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Kathleen Scully
Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal