

Simple Steps to Avoid Unnecessary Doping Charges

– Avoiding the Foreseeable

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Today's competition horses are under constant scrutiny to avoid even perceptions of doping and training abuses by competition officials and the public. The inability of a horse to protect itself from unscrupulous practices makes strict oversight of training and competition mandatory. This can create an adversarial atmosphere between riders, trainers, stewards, and equestrian regulatory bodies. Positive tests for forbidden substances degrade the athlete, the horse, and our sport's reputation. Some violations involve doping with drugs that have no role in horse care: use of these drugs is intentional and dangerous for horses. These violators deserve the full force of sanctions and fines imposed.

Other times, doping violations are unintentional and occur with controlled medications because of negligent horse care. Negligence is failing to exercise the necessary care to prevent foreseeable violations. Even though the athlete or trainer may not have intended to administer or compete on a prohibited substance, the strict liability standard still applies and penalties will be levied.

Athletes and trainers can prevent inadvertent doping violations by avoiding situations that create risk of a competition horse ingesting a prohibited substance that causes a positive doping test. Most of these preventative steps are relatively simple to follow.

Have separate and labelled feed buckets for competition horses at shows.

Whatever you do, don't mix feed buckets at horse shows, especially in U.S. National competitions where certain nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are allowed if used alone. Don't take the chance of residue of one NSAID in a feed bucket for one horse contaminating another horse maintained on a different one, if the buckets are used interchangeably. It is good practice to have a dedicated feed bucket for each horse to eliminate the possibility of cross-contamination. If nothing else, having and using a separate feed bucket for each horse shows that one is trying to avoid possible cross-contamination.

Do not leave medications in pre-filled feed buckets at

competitions, even if labelled with the horse's name.

It is common practice at barns to fill feed buckets up at night for the next morning. Unfortunately, some barns also put medications into the feed to avoid having to do so in the morning. It is one thing if a horse gets the wrong feed, but a very different matter if a horse gets the wrong feed and the wrong medication. This error often goes undetected until the horse who got the wrong feed comes up with a positive doping or medication violation. Although the greatest danger exists if this happens at a competition, a doping violation can also occur if a prohibited substance is ingested by a horse at home before leaving for a competition.

Make one person responsible for administration of all medications.

Only one person in the barn should be authorized to give medication, whether in the feed or by injection. The designated person must accept the responsibility for making sure that the right horse gets the right medication in the right dose in the right manner. This person must also take responsibility for ensuring that medication put in the feed is given to the right horse. Think before you give any supplements to your competition horse.

Under FEI and USEF rules, the rider and trainer assume all the risk that a supplement may contain prohibited substances. Even if one has taken all possible precautions to avoid prohibited substances, a positive test means loss of prizes and having to explain the circumstances of how the prohibited substance got into the horse. Due diligence before using a supplement includes, but is not limited to, checking the ingredients (both brand name and chemical name) in the product against the prohibited substance list and checking with your veterinarian before administering it. Never use a supplement for the first time at a competition without taking all possible steps to assure there are no prohibited substances in it.

At home, wash all buckets out at least once a week to remove any drug residue.

Since drug levels can often last for many days after



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ingestion, it is good practice at home to wash all feed buckets out at least once a week to remove any residue of any drug that may have been given to a horse previously. Each barn should keep a medication log book, and each horse that competes in FEI competitions should have its own medication log book.

There should be a log book for each barn that records the basic details of all medications given to all horses. Each horse that competes in FEI competition should have its own medication log book. The medication given, the dose, the date and time, and the veterinarian who authorized it should all be recorded. Documenting the administration of medications prevents inadvertent double dosing, the giving of medication to the wrong horse, and possible inadvertent medication violations. Medication log books may be evidence of an effort to prevent inadvertent doping and may be a mitigating factor in the case of a violation.

Don't rely on published drug clearance times.

Medication clearance times are published by various equestrian regulatory bodies, but these times are not absolute. Depending on the dose, the route of administration, the particular brand formulation and the horse's metabolic status, drugs may not clear within

the published clearance times. Do not assume if the clearance time for a medication is listed at 72 hours, that the drug is not detectable 73 hours or even 96 hours after ingestion. Always check with your veterinarian about wait times before going to the competition after the administration of an indicated medication.

By taking these basic precautions and having the foresight to recognize situations that could pose a problem, owners, trainers, and riders can help ensure a positive competition experience for all and avoid unintentional positive doping test.

Leone Equestrian Law, LLC provides legal services and consultation for equestrian professionals ranging from riders and trainers to owners and show managers in the FEI disciplines on a wide variety of issues. With a wealth of experience in the equestrian industry through founder Armand Leone and partner Jessica Choper, Leone Equestrian Law, LLC gives their clients personalized care with the utmost respect for confidentiality. For more information, please visit www.equestrianadvice.com and follow them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/leoneequestrianlaw.com.