

Prevention of positive samples for Prohibited Substances in Point-to-Points

Keepers and Owners Guidance

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Introduction

This document is designed to provide some assistance to Owners and Keepers in seeking to prevent samples taken from their horses testing positive for Prohibited Substances. The document does not negate the need for Keepers and Owners to read and understand all of the [Point-to-Point Regulations](#) (and the [BHA Rules of Racing](#) if you are entering horses in Hunter Chases), and the additional guidance documents published on the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) website on this subject.

This document should not be taken as an exhaustive list or a replacement for your own procedures and policies to minimise your own risk of breaching the Regulations and Rules (where applicable).

If you have any queries, please email the BHA Anti-Doping department anti-doping@britishhorseracing.com.

Background

Each year the BHA samples horses both on and off the racecourse to identify any trends in medications used in the training environment, as well as any substances that may impact a horse's performance during a race. Every year thousands of samples are collected some of which test positive.

A positive sample, sometimes referred to as an Adverse Analytical Finding, triggers a BHA investigation, which will include efforts to try and identify the potential source of the positive sample.

If the positive sample relates to a race run under the Rules of Racing then an Owner or Keeper may receive no sanction for a positive sample only if **they** are able to establish the precise route as to how the Prohibited Substance entered their horse's body **and** that they had taken all reasonable precautions to avoid violating the relevant Anti-Doping Rules.

If the positive sample relates to a race run under the Point-to-Point Regulations, then the BHA may waive the fine if the Owner or Keeper satisfies them that the substance was not administered intentionally by them or by any other person, and that they have taken all reasonable precautions to avoid a breach of this Regulation.

Any person who is in any way involved in the administration¹ of a Prohibited Substance to a horse, with the intention to affect the racing performance of that horse in a race, or with knowledge that its racing performance in a race could be affected, shall also be guilty of a breach of the Regulations and may be declared a disqualified person. **The horse will, in all cases, be disqualified from the race.**

Many positive samples have been found to be the likely result of contamination or inadequate withdrawal times.

The Owner is the person responsible for any positive sample unless, when signing the Hunter Certificate for the horse, the Owner has passed the responsibility to the Keeper.

The definition under the Regulations of a “Keeper” is:

- *‘a person to whom an Owner has passed the care and training of their horse and who, as the Keeper, becomes responsible for compliance with the Point-to-Point Regulations for Steeple Chases as if the Owner. No action will be taken against the Keeper where it can be shown that any breach of the Regulations was the result of an action of the Owner, to which the Keeper was not a party, in which case the Owner will be responsible’.*

It is advised that Keepers or Owners (where the care and training has not been so passed) have protocols and policies in place to try and prevent positive samples. It is also your responsibility to ensure any staff are aware of relevant policies and receive adequate and regular training on the subject.

The guidance below was developed primarily for Trainers, but will also assist those running horses under the Regulations with best practices, to minimise the risks.

Common Causes of positive samples

The following guidance highlights some of the most common causes of a positive sample, but this is by no means an exhaustive list. Further guidance can be found on the BHA [Equine Anti-Doping](#) pages.

Medication control

Detection times

Many, but not all, routine medications used in the training environment have published detection times. Detection times are defined as the interval between the drug administration time and the time at which the observed urine (and plasma) concentrations in horses are below the harmonised European (European Horseracing Scientific Liaison Committee) Screening Limit or International Screening Limit.

It is important to consult the BHA's [list of detection times](#) and all of the associated notices and policies on the BHA website [Anti-Doping](#) page, which includes up to date detection times for medications given at specific doses. It should be noted that detection times are published based on a specific dose, route, dosing regime and product, and will be subject to variation when

¹ Any person who administers or attempts to administer or allows or causes to be administered, or connives at the administration to a horse of a Prohibited Substance, with the intention to affect the racing performance of that horse in a race, or with knowledge that its racing performance in a race could be affected shall also be guilty of a breach of the Regulations and may be declared a disqualified person.

alternatives to these are used. These documents are updated from time to time, and you must ensure you are utilising the most up to date information.

Withdrawal period

Detection times are not the same as withdrawal periods. To decide a withdrawal period, an adequate safety margin should be added to a detection time. This safety margin should be chosen by the treating veterinary surgeon, using their professional judgement, and should consider potential biological, pharmaceutical and pharmacological variation.

This makes a discussion with your veterinary surgeon essential when considering administration of any medication which is a prohibited substance on raceday. Carefully assessed and adequate time, specific to the particular administration, must always be allowed before running a horse that has been administered a prohibited substance. If a published detection time is not available, then such assessment is even more important.

Stand-down period

It is also important to understand that a minimum mandatory standdown period is NOT the same as a detection time. [Guidance](#) has been published regarding the use of intra-articular (joint) injections of corticosteroids.

Equine welfare is of paramount importance, and you should assess the need, risk and consequences of administering or not administering any medication.

Medications should be used on veterinary advice, stored securely and written records kept of their use and the advice given by your veterinary surgeon. It is important that any treatment complies with the regulations set out in law under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and guidance provided by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), particularly regarding the restriction of unqualified laypersons administering intravenous injections or intramuscular injections. These are considered complex procedures that must only be carried out by a qualified veterinary surgeon or under their direct supervision by a veterinary nurse or veterinary student.

Reducing the risk of contamination

Contamination from medications should be controlled with yard medication management and policies applicable to all staff on the yard to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Areas to consider are not limited to, but could include:

- Contamination from treated horses to untreated horses through the use of communal bridles and bits
- Contamination from treated horses to untreated horses via physical contact. For example, through stable bars or shared facilities such as horse walkers and horseboxes
- Contamination from staff handling treated and untreated horses in succession, e.g. when tacking up or medicating the horses
- Storage or preparation of medications near feed stuffs e.g. feed room and tack room including racing tack
- Sharing of feed mangers or non-effective cleaning of feed mangers post medication
- Administration of medication in the stabling environment particularly with medications in powder form
- Medication residue contaminating other medications in storage or administration syringes

- Medications being excreted in urine and faeces. This is particularly important with horses sharing turn out or any communal loose boxes/pens.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of things you could consider:

- Using a dedicated area for administration of medication
- Ensuring the medication storage cabinet or room is always locked with only appointed members of staff having access
- Emptying and thoroughly decontaminating stabling, troughs and mangers following a course of medication or when a horse moves box
- Ensuring that the cleaning of stables is sufficiently thorough to remove anything that could contain a prohibited substance
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the standards expected on the yard and are regularly reminded of such standards
- Displaying signage reminding staff and visitors of the standards expected and policies in place
- Implementing a checking procedure to ensure that the expected standards are being met
- Obtaining the veterinary histories of new equine arrivals into the yard.

Human medication, recreational drugs and feed stuffs

It is not just equine medications that can cause a positive sample. Substances that could trigger a positive can be found in many everyday items of human food, drinks, over the counter treatments and medications as well as prescription medications from a GP.

There is also an ever-growing risk of contamination due to staff (or even visitor) use of recreational drugs. It is imperative you ensure your staff are fully aware of such risks and what your policies are on the yard to reduce them.

Contamination from staff or visitor's medication, and the consumption of food, drink and drugs should be controlled by a yard policy applicable to all staff on, and visitors to, the yard to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Areas to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing a policy to manage these risks and ensuring staff and visitors are aware of it and reminded of its importance regularly
- Being aware of potential contaminants being brought onto the yard e.g. staff prescription medication and over the counter medications such as topical treatments, tablets, powders, creams, aerosols and gels
- Ensuring any medication brought onto the yard is kept in a designated area, away from the stables and in a suitably secure manner
- Ensuring staff, wherever possible, take any medications or apply topical treatments **after** close contact with horses such as at the end of the day to reduce the risk of contamination. If this is not possible, ensuring all staff thoroughly wash their hands and/or wear gloves to ensure there is no trace of the medication present

- Restricting the consumption of food and drink on the yard with associated signage. This is particularly important regarding the consumption of food and drinks containing prohibited substances such as caffeine, which could trigger an AAF
- Implementing a hand washing procedure particularly on first entry to the yard, before and after eating and administration of medications and when handling new equine arrivals into the yard
- Implementing a suitable recreational drugs and alcohol testing and education policy. Staff should be regularly reminded that medications and or recreational drugs all have pharmacological effects and can be easily transferred from staff to equines, for example from hands, under fingernails or metabolites of substances excreted from sweat through skin or urine
- Ensuring food intended for human consumption isn't given to horses or stored close to equine feed stuffs or tack
- Providing single use disposable gloves that can be used by staff using medications or administering equine medications to horses on the yard
- Ensuring staff do not urinate outside of designated toilet facilities and never in a horse's stable
- Implementing checking procedures to ensure staff comply with the yard policies and procedures
- Displaying signage reminding staff and visitors of the standards expected and policies in place
- Ensuring staff and visitors understand the reasons for such policies and procedures and how important they are.

Equine Feed provision, suitability and storage

It is strongly recommended to purchase feed from reputable feed merchants, or direct from the manufacturer, to ensure the feed has been stored and transported in a suitable manner to prevent feed degrading or being contaminated in transit.

Feed compounds, straight feeds and supplements are supplied by many manufacturers across the world. You should ensure that you are aware of the ingredients of the feed/supplement prior to feeding and be sure that any combinations of feed/supplements do not contain levels of trace elements such as cobalt and arsenic, or nutraceuticals such as methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) that together could trigger an AAF, including through accumulation.

It is strongly recommended to use a feed or supplements supplied by a manufacturer accredited by the [BETA](#) NOPS Code. This provides assurances from the British Equestrian Trade Association to reduce the risk of naturally occurring prohibited substances found in the feed compounds and supplements and the raw / straight feeds.

BETA NOPS assured feed will carry the BETA NOPS logo as well as featuring on the [BETA](#) NOPS website. Feed with this assurance doesn't guarantee a complete removal of prohibited substances through either intentional or unintentional contamination, but there are rigorous processes to reduce this risk.



Contamination from feed / supplements should be managed by a yard policy applicable to all staff on the yard to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Areas to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Securing of the feed storage for both bulk and preparation of feed when not in use
- Regular thorough cleaning of feed mangers, feed barrows and scoops
- Appointing a member of staff to take responsibility for the storage and distribution of feed
- Ensuring no human or equine medication is stored, prepared or administered in or near to the feed storage / preparation area
- Washing hands thoroughly prior to preparing or distributing feed and/or wearing of suitable gloves
- Using a transparent chain of supply from growth, harvest, manufacture and delivery to ascertain the origin of the product
- Logging feed batch numbers and a small sample that can be used for follow up testing
- Not mixing feed containing medications with non-medication mixers
- Using a designated trough/manger/bucket for medications
- Ensuring all staff are made fully aware of the yard policies, the reasons behind them, and are regularly reminded of them
- Displaying signage reminding staff and visitors of the standards expected and policies in place
- Implementing checking procedures to ensure policies and procedures are being adhered to.

Farmland and grazing

It is recommended that enquiries are made as to whether any Sustainable Farming Incentives such as conservation headlands, conservation strips and buffer strips are being implemented on farmland adjacent to land used for grazing or hay production, where seed mixes may have been planted that potentially contain Naturally Occurring Prohibited Substances.

Contact

If you have any questions on anything discussed in this document, please contact: anti-doping@britishhorseracing.com.