

MR PAUL RUSSO - INQUIRY CONDUCTED

MAY 26 2021

Harness Racing New South Wales (HRNSW) Stewards have conducted an Inquiry in relation to reports from the Australian Racing Forensic Laboratory (ARFL) that Levamisole had been detected in the urine samples taken from the horse MAGIC OATS NZ following its wins in the following races:

- Race 6 conducted at Tabcorp Park Menangle on Tuesday 1 December 2020;
- Race 5 conducted at Tabcorp Park Menangle on Tuesday 15 December 2020.

The 'B' samples and control solutions were confirmed by Racing Analytical Service Limited (RASL) in Victoria.

Licensed Trainer Mr Paul Russo and HRNSW Regulatory Veterinarian Dr Martin Wainscott were present and provided evidence to the Inquiry.

Mr Russo pleaded guilty to two (2) charges issued by HRNSW Stewards pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule (AHRR) 190 (1), (2) & (4) as follows:

Charges 1 & 2

AHRR 190. (1) *A horse shall be presented for a race free of prohibited substances.*

(2) *If a horse is presented for a race otherwise than in accordance with sub rule (1) the trainer of the horse is guilty of an offence.*

(3) *If a person is left in charge of a horse and the horse is presented for a race otherwise than in accordance with sub rule (1), the trainer of the horse and the person left in charge is each guilty of an offence.*

(4) *An offence under sub rule (2) or sub rule (3) is committed regardless of the circumstances in which the prohibited substance came to be present in or on the horse.*

In addition, Mr Russo pleaded guilty to a charge issued by HRNSW Stewards pursuant to AHRR 196A(1)(ii) & (2) as follows:

Charge 3

AHRR 196A. (1) *A person shall not administer or cause to be administered to a horse any prohibited substance*

(ii) *which is detected in any sample taken from such horse prior to or following the running of any race.*

(2) *A person who fails to comply with sub-rule (1) is guilty of an offence.*

In relation to Charges 1 and 2, Mr Russo was disqualified for a period of 6 years for each charge to be served concurrently.

In relation to Charge 3, Mr Russo was disqualified for a period of 2 years and 3 months to be served cumulative to Charges 1 & 2.

**For further information on this matter contact:
HRNSW Integrity Department
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In total, Mr Russo was disqualified for period of 8 years and 3 months to commence from 19 January 2021, the date upon which he was stood down.

In considering penalty Stewards were mindful of the following;

- Mr Russo's personal subjectives;
- Mr Russo's guilty pleas;
- Mr Russo's involvement as a trainer in the harness racing industry since 1982/83 season;
- Mr Russo's fourth prohibited substance presentation related offences;
- Class 2 Prohibited Substance;
- The impact of a disqualification upon Mr Russo from a personal and financial perspective.

Acting under the provisions of AHRR 195, MAGIC OATS NZ was disqualified from the abovementioned races.

Mr Russo was advised of his right to appeal these decisions of HRNSW Stewards.

**For further information on this matter contact:
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