

MR BRUCE BIRCH - INQUIRY CONCLUDED

12 August 2026

On Wednesday 12 August 2026, Harness Racing New South Wales (HRNSW) Stewards concluded an Inquiry into a report received from the Australian Racing Forensic Laboratory (ARFL) that Levamisole had been detected in the pre and post-race blood samples taken from SHEETWEB WEAVER prior to, and following its win, in Race 2 the APIAM AGNES BANKS PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TROTTERS MOBILE (1609 metres) conducted at Menangle on Tuesday 25 March 2025.

In addition, the Inquiry also related to a report received from the ARFL that Triamcinolone Acetonide was detected in the pre-race blood sample taken from SHEETWEB WEAVER prior to its win in Race 5, the SUN SOLUTIONS HOME IMPROVEMENTS GOULBURN TROTTERS CUP (2240 metres) conducted at Goulburn on Sunday 13 April 2026.

The reserve portion and control solution of the respective samples were confirmed by Racing Analytical Services Limited in Victoria.

Licensed trainer Mr Burce Birch appeared at the Inquiry and presented evidence in relation to the horse SHEETWEB WEAVER, his registered training establishment and his husbandry practices.

A number of documents were entered into evidence at the Inquiry including the Certificates of Analysis in relation to the raceday samples and the analytical results of a number of samples taken from Mr Birch's registered training establishment, which included a sample from an open bottle of 'Fenbender 100', which was found to contain Levamisole.

In addition, the analytical results from the testing of an unopened container of 'Fenbender 100' purchased by Harness Racing NSW were also presented to the Inquiry. Testing of the purchased bottle of 'Fenbender 100' was also found to contain Levamisole.

HRNSW Chief Integrity Officer Mr Michael Prentice, HRNSW Regulatory Veterinarian Dr Martin Wainscott and ARFL General Manager Mr John Keledjian provided evidence to the Inquiry.

Charges Issued

After consideration of the available evidence, Mr Birch was issued 2 charges under AHRR 190(1),(2) and 4 which states:

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.*

(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.*

Charge 1

The particulars of Charge 1 were that as the licensed trainer of SHEETWEB WEAVER, Mr Birch did present that horse to race at Menangle on 25 March 2025, not free of a prohibited substance, namely Levamisole as reported by two laboratories approved by Harness Racing NSW.

Mr Birch pleaded not guilty to Charge 1 and was subsequently found guilty.

Charge 2

The particulars of Charge 2 were that as the licensed trainer of SHEETWEB WEAVER, Mr Birch did present that horse to race at Goulburn on 13 April 2025, not free of a prohibited substance, namely Triamcinolone Acetonide as reported by two laboratories approved by Harness Racing NSW.

Mr Birch pleaded guilty to Charge 2.

Penalties Imposed

Charge 1

In considering penalty with respect to Charge 1 Stewards were mindful of the following;

- The circumstances of this matter including the evidence of Dr Wainscott and Dr Keledjian;
- Class 2 Prohibited Substance;
- The detection of Levamisole in the opened bottle of 'Fenbender 100' at the registered training establishment, which was confirmed by the findings of the purchased bottle;
- The notation made in Mr Birch's log book concerning the use of 'Fenbender 100';
- Mr Birch's licence history and offence record, during a 28 year involvement in the harness racing industry;
- Mr Birch's personal subjective facts;

As Stewards were satisfied, on the available evidence, that the detection of Levamisole could not have been foreseen by Mr Birch Stewards did not record a conviction and no penalty was imposed pursuant to AHRR 256(6).

Charge 2

In considering penalty with respect to Charge 2 Stewards were mindful of the following;

- The circumstances of this matter including the evidence of Dr Wainscott and Dr Keledjian;
- Class 3 Prohibited Substance;
- Mr Birch's guilty plea;
- On the available evidence the detection of Triamcinolone Acetonide occurred due to contamination from a prescribed human medication;
- The various warnings issued by HRNSW concerning the contamination from human medications within the stable environment;
- Mr Birch's licence history and offence record, during a 28 year involvement in the harness racing industry;
- Mr Birch's personal subjective facts;

Stewards accordingly imposed a fine of \$2,000.

Acting under the provisions of Australian Harness Racing Rule 195, SHEETWEB WEAVER was disqualified from the abovementioned races.

Mr Birch was advised of his right to appeal these decisions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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