



Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Session to discuss statements made about integrity and drug usage in horseracing

Opening Statement by Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board (IHRB)

Thursday, 8th July 2021

Chairman, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board I want to thank the Chair and Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Food & the Marine for their invitation to appear before the Oireachtas Committee.

The IHRB was pleased to accept the Committee's invitation and the opportunity it provides to address statements in the media which have been made about integrity and drug usage in Irish racing. We appreciate the fact that the Committee Chair and Members have given time in what is a busy work programme to allow us to set the record straight and we look forward to answering the questions that the Deputies and Senators may have.

For those of you who don't know me, I am Denis Egan, Chief Executive of the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board. I am joined here today by my colleague Dr Lynn Hillyer, PhD, CertEM(IntMed) MRCVs, MVCI, who is the Head of Anti-Doping and Chief Veterinary Officer for the IHRB. Lynn joined the IHRB in 2016 having worked as a regulatory specialist in anti-doping for the British Horseracing Authority since 2005. She is recognised globally in her field having published specifically on detection of prohibited substances and is Chair of the International Groups of Specialist Racing Veterinarians, and member of the



International Federation of Horseracing Authorities' (IFHA) Advisory Council on Prohibited Substances and Practices, and of the European Horserace Scientific Liaison Committee (EHS LC).

We are also joined here today by Dr Clive Pearce, Laboratory Director, Director of Sport and Specialised Analytical Services at LGC who has been working with us since 2018. As Director of Sport & Specialised Analytical Services, Clive's responsibilities encompass the drug detection associated with regulated animal sports, dietary supplements and feeds, and specialised human workplace testing in LGC's laboratories in both the UK (Fordham) and the US (Lexington). As a 'racing chemist' and Laboratory Director, Clive is active in major international organisations associated with the regulation of animal sports. Aside from the AORC, he is a board member of the EHS LC, a member of the International Equestrian Federation's (FEI) Laboratory and Prohibited List Groups, and the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities' (IFHA) Reference Laboratory Technical Committee and their Advisory Council on Prohibited Substances and Practices.

LGC is the laboratory that analyses all our equine samples and is one of only 5 laboratories in the world certified by the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities to analyse racing samples to a benchmark which exceeds accreditation.

Introduction

The Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board CLG is a company set up by the Turf Club and Irish National Hunt Steeplechase Committee to carry out the functions assigned to the Racing Regulatory Body under the Horse Racing Ireland Act, 2016. It is responsible for the integrity of Irish racing including doping control and forensics. It carries out its functions through a team of highly trained, professional racing officials and administrative staff as well as dedicated and experienced voluntary raceday stewards and committee members.

In 2016, the Irish Racing and Breeding industries came together on a single issue – tackling doping in the wake of the John Hughes case which had been prosecuted in the courts. The subsequent recommendations of a Task Force comprising industry representatives which were reiterated in an updated policy

IRISH HORSERACING REGULATORY BOARD COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

THE CURRAGH, CO. KILDARE, R56 Y668, IRELAND

+353 45 445 600 F+353 45 445 601 E info@ihrb.ie W www.ihrb.ie

Registered Office: Riverside One, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2. Company Number: 606527

Directors: H. McCalmont, M. O'Donnell, J.J. Power, Philip McLernon, David McCorkell, John Byrne





document in 2018 are the foundation for our work today. The appointment of Dr. Hillyer as Head of Equine Anti-Doping, an established expert in her field, a public procurement process to appoint one of the best laboratories in the world and a seismic shift in increasing out of competition testing were all early tangible outputs from those industry agreements.

The IHRB's Equine Anti-Doping programme has developed into a sophisticated and extensive risk-based and intelligence led strategy in which it is not just the numbers of samples which matter but from what horse they are taken, where and when.

Regarding the 'where and when', in addition to the authority the IHRB have under the Rules of Racing in relation to licensed people and premises, 12 IHRB officials, including 5 qualified veterinary surgeons, were appointed as Authorised Officers under the Animal Remedies Act on 21st May this year. These officials can identify and sample any Thoroughbred at any time and in any place along with the authority to seize products, documentation or other evidence as necessary.

The ability to do this is ground-breaking and part of our armoury in protecting the integrity of Irish Racing, which no other racing authority has.

What we do and how we do it

The IHRB sample horses both on and off the racecourse taking blood, urine and/or hair. Using these different samples allows us to detect a range of thousands of substances for varying lengths of time. Taking the right type of sample from the right horse at the right time is an essential part of any modern anti-doping programme's test distribution.

The IHRB continually refine this, for example now taking more out of competition samples than ever. We are the first racing authority to take hair samples routinely on the racecourse.

All sampling is:

- witnessed by a representative of the person responsible for the horse,
- split into an "A" and "B" portion,
- anonymised and sealed in a tamper proof bottle.





The process is automated using an App based system which ensures integrity, real time data transfer and minimises the risk of human error. At the end of each testing session, the samples are sealed – again in front of the responsible person - into a locked box and transported under chain of custody to a secure unit prior to being couriered to LGC Laboratories.

The laboratory has detailed procedures in place to ensure that the sample numbers received correspond with the anonymised consignment record sent immediately the sample is taken and that none of the sample bottles have been tampered with.

This process is similar to those used in all sport bodies whether for human or animal athletes.

I would like to emphasise that all samples are analysed with screening results usually reported to the IHRB within 7 working days.

Analysis of a sample happens in two stages:

1. screening which gives the first part of the substance's fingerprint and
2. confirmatory analysis, which definitively identifies the substance.

An investigation is initiated by the veterinary team as soon as a screening finding is reported. This may involve an unannounced inspection of the yard with sampling of the case horse and other horses, review of veterinary records and interviews of licensees involved. This is all done ahead of the confirmatory result in order to maximise the likelihood of identifying a source of the substance and give the responsible person the opportunity to address any issues which could for example lead to further problems, such as the horse running again when it is likely still affected by the substance.

The trainer has the option of counter-analysis of the "B" portion at a separate certified laboratory and if the adverse analytical finding is confirmed or if the trainer accepts the results of the "A" portion, the matter is then dealt with by an IHRB Disciplinary Committee.

All adverse analytical findings for prohibited substances are prosecuted via a disciplinary procedure. The trainer has the right of appeal against any penalty.



Laboratory

LGC Laboratories in Newmarket have been the contracted laboratory for IHRB samples since 2018. Established in 1963, LGC have a long history as world leaders in the development and application of cutting edge approaches to detect existing and emerging drugs, from anabolic steroids in the early sixties through to more complex biological threats and gene doping now in 2021.

In a typical year, LGC carry out analysis on over 50,000 equine and canine samples and have an ongoing commitment to investing in new technology with contractual requirement to share with the IHRB the outputs of new methods of testing and research as well.

LGC is one of five International Federation of Horseracing Authorities certified laboratories, enabling the IHRB to continually benefit from data and intelligence shared between the best racing laboratories in the world. An extensive programme of on-going technical work to evidence performance is required to maintain this certification.

LGC's reputation in anabolic steroid and hair analysis is recognised globally and in LGC the IHRB has access to the most pioneering laboratory in the world in these two areas as well as meeting the highest standards, along with the other laboratories, in relation to analysis of samples for other prohibited substances.

Collaborations and Intelligence

As part of its Equine Anti-Doping programme, the IHRB regularly collaborates with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), other Irish sporting and regulatory bodies and other racing jurisdictions on anti-doping matters and intelligence. It is also a member of several international groups that collaborate and share intelligence on equine drug testing.

A huge factor in any anti-doping program and indeed any regulatory program is intelligence and information. Any information received by us is assessed, categorised and actioned as appropriate. It is vitally important to the IHRB that those directly and indirectly involved in the industry understand this and the fact





that they can provide any information to us in a confidential manner via the confidential hotline, email or by contacting our officials.

We also work with the statutory authorities where appropriate in actioning intelligence as well as working under our own powers.

Intelligence assists us in the planning and actioning of the anti-doping program and is an important factor but no disciplinary action can be taken without evidence of a breach. Identifying such evidence is vital for any successful disciplinary action to be taken.

It is also important that the industry understands that AAF's are not the only indication of an active and effective anti-doping programme – detection is an essential part of the strategy but deterrence and disruption are also successful outcomes from action in this area.

Activity since the start of the year

In carrying out its anti-doping testing programme the IHRB, applies a risk analysis and intelligence-based strategy to its selection of premises and horses for testing. The focus is to obtain the right sample from the right horse at the right time.

In the six months since the start of the year the IHRB have inspected 33 premises, testing at 18 of these, 7 of which were unlicensed. The unlicensed yards included studs, pre-training yards, sales consignors' premises and also testing at the barrier trials. Prior to the appointment of the 12 IHRB officials as Authorised Officers it would not have been possible to access and test at the unlicensed premises.

The IHRB understands the need for confidentiality in such cases to guarantee success. The inspections are unannounced with a specific process in operation to ensure that only those who need to know where the team are going know – this is restricted to the Head of Anti-Doping in the first instance with the Lead Investigating Officer being informed the evening before and the rest of the team informed only at rendezvous on the morning of the inspection.

In the year to date a total 2,449 samples have been taken of which 1,752 (72%) were taken on the racecourse and at point-to-points and 697 (28%) were taken





as part of the out-of-competition testing programme. In total 10 AAF's have been confirmed, none of which involve substances that are prohibited at all times.

Conclusion

In conclusion the IHRB now has unique anti-doping powers that are unparalleled in any other jurisdiction. The appointment of IHRB officials as Authorised Officers is a game changer as it enables these officials to access any Thoroughbred horse in any place at any time.

We continue to work with LGC, one of the leading laboratories in the world who are pioneers in the analysis of hair samples.

We have a top-class anti-doping team headed up by Dr Lynn Hillyer and whilst we continue to evidence that there is no systematic attempt to cheat through doping in Irish racing, we will continue, with the assistance of the industry and those outside, to effectively detect, disrupt and deter such behaviour – it will not be tolerated, we will continue to seek it out and where discovered we will take all actions within our power to combat it without fear or favour.

I would again like to thank the Chair and Members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture for giving us the opportunity to address you and to set the record straight on some misconceptions that exists on the work of the IHRB in the area of anti-doping.

We would be pleased to deal with any questions you may have in due course and we also enclose a copy of our Equine Anti-Doping Report which was issued last week.

