



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Monday, 7 April, 2014

### **COBALT THRESHOLD INTRODUCED**

Racing Victoria (RV) has today announced the introduction of a prohibition threshold for the substance Cobalt to prevent its potential use as an equine performance enhancer in Victorian racing.

RV has introduced a new Local Rule, effective from 14 April 2014, which states that Cobalt is a prohibited substance at a concentration of greater than 200 micrograms per litre in urine.

It will now be a breach of the rules in Victoria for horses to have Cobalt in their system, both on raceday and out-of-competition, at a level above the threshold.

RV Executive General Manager – Integrity, Dayle Brown, explained that Cobalt is an endogenous substance and that an increase in levels can aid in improving a horse's performance.

"We have credible intelligence to suggest that Cobalt poses a potential threat to both the integrity of Victorian thoroughbred racing and the welfare of our horses and by association riders," Brown said.

"Cobalt is found naturally in horses, but at levels far less than the threshold of 200 micrograms per litre in urine which has been set taking into account expert veterinary and legal advice.

"We are of the firm belief that any horse with Cobalt present at a level above 200 micrograms per litre in urine has achieved such a reading unnaturally and thus measures have been taken to enhance its performance.

"Trainers should note that every sample taken by Stewards will be tested for Cobalt levels and prosecutions will follow if horses are found to be above the published threshold. Those considering flouting the rules should be prepared to pay the penalty for their actions."

Brown said that Cobalt when present at high levels within horses acts as a Hypoxia Inducible Factor (HIF-1) stabiliser to stimulate red blood cell production which is a breach of the Australian Rules of Racing.

"In simple terms it means that the administration of Cobalt can assist in generating more red blood cells to carry oxygen through the body and thus allow a horse to perform at a peak level for longer without the on-set of fatigue and lactic acid," Brown explained.

"Under Australian Rules of Racing 177B(1) and (2)(l) the detection of HIF-1 stabilisers in a horse in training is prohibited. Cobalt present at a level above our new threshold is deemed to be a HIF-1 stabiliser and thus constitutes a breach of the Rules."

With effect from 14 April 2014, RV stewards may take action;

- a. where Cobalt is detected in out-of-competition samples above 200 micrograms per litre in urine under AR 177B(1); and
- b. where Cobalt, other than in commercial feeds or commercial supplements, is found in a quantity that could give rise to an offence under AR 177B(1) if administered to a horse at any time at any premises used in relation to the training or racing of horses, then action may be taken under AR 177B(5) in respect of the possession or deemed possession of that substance.

With respect to the presence of Cobalt in raceday samples, Local Rule 68A takes effect from 14 April 2014 and reads;

*“In addition to the prohibited substances referred to in AR 178C, Cobalt, when present at or below the concentration of 200 micrograms per litre in urine, is excepted from the provisions of AR 178B”.*

ENDS

Notes To Editors

*Racing Victoria collected 14,816 swab samples during the 2012-13 racing season with 10 swabs positive to prohibited substances.*

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