

## MR PETER RUSSO - INQUIRY CONCLUDED

2 JUNE 2022

Harness Racing New South Wales (HRNSW) Stewards concluded an Inquiry yesterday that commenced on 20 April 2022 into a report received that Total Plasma Carbon Dioxide above the prescribed threshold had been detected in the pre-race blood sample taken from DIVINE DIVA prior to it running in race 3, the WARDS ACCOUNTING GROUP LADYSHIP PACE (1609 metres) conducted at Tabcorp Park Menangle on Saturday 9 October 2021.

Trainer Mr Peter Russo appeared at the Inquiry with legal representation and provided evidence in relation to his registered training establishment and the horse DIVINE DIVA. HRNSW Regulatory Veterinarian Dr Martin Wainscott and Australian Racing Forensic Laboratory (ARFL) Science Manager Dr Adam Cawley were also present on 20 April 2022 and provided evidence to the Inquiry.

The certificates of analysis were also entered into evidence at the Inquiry. The certificate of analysis provided by the Racing Science Centre in Queensland reported a TCO<sub>2</sub> level of 37.3 millimoles per litre (mmol/L) in plasma. In addition, certificates provided by ARFL reported an initial level of 36.8 mmol/L and a subsequent analysis of 35.6 mmol/L.

Mr Russo was found guilty of a charge issued by HRNSW Stewards pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule (AHRR) 190 (1), (2) & (4) as follows:

**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.*

Mr Russo was disqualified for a period of 3 years 6 months to commence immediately. HRNSW Stewards also gave consideration to a period of approximately two (2) weeks where Mr Russo was stood down pursuant to AHRR 183 prior to obtaining a Stay of Proceedings.

Consequently, Mr Russo is disqualified until 17 November 2025.

In considering penalty Stewards were mindful of the following;

- Mr Russo's previous Prohibited Substance offences;
- Class 2 Prohibited Substance;
- The levels reported in this matter;
- Mr Russo's licence history and other personal subjective facts.

Acting under the provisions of Rule 195, DIVINE DIVA was disqualified from the abovementioned race.

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

Mr Russo has been provided with a period of time stipulated by HRNSW Stewards to attend to the welfare of his horses with the assistance of licensed persons until other arrangements can be made.

For further information on this matter contact:  
HRNSW Integrity Department  
(02) 9722 6655