

# Report of the Irish Thoroughbred Industry Anti-Doping Task Force

The following consensus statement was agreed by all members of the Task Force

*Illegal performance enhancing drugs have no place in the Irish racing and breeding industries. In particular, the Task Force supports the position of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities that the use of anabolic steroids should not be permitted in or out of competition. Doping is cheating, and cheating is fraud: cheats have no place in our industry. Doping confers an unfair advantage on one individual over another, has the potential to pose serious welfare risks to horses and damages the perception of racing and breeding. Ultimately it places at risk the valuable trade in Irish bloodstock and the business of betting on Irish racing. The organisations represented on the Task Force are committed to ensuring that the drug testing regime in the Irish racing and breeding sectors is one that can meet current and future challenges. The organisations that we represent strongly support a robust anti-doping strategy in Irish racing and breeding. Furthermore we encourage all stakeholders to continue to pass on any information that they become aware of about the importation and/or use of illegal drugs to the Turf Club or the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.*

## Introduction

The Irish Thoroughbred horse racing and breeding industry is worth in excess of €1 billion annually to the Irish economy and is a significant source of export revenue and foreign direct investment into the country. Irish horses are exported to more than 37 countries worldwide.

The Irish Thoroughbred horse is a potent symbol for our country and Irish trainers, horses and riders successfully compete at the highest level in all major international race meetings. Hundreds of millions of Euro are bet annually on Irish racing both at home and internationally, while Irish horses provide much of the raw material for British racing where the betting market is significantly larger.

Fundamental to this success and economic activity is the assurance that the product is clean. The overarching principle is that a horse races or is sold on its own inherent merits, without having recourse to pharmacological aids. Participants in racing are bound by national legislation regarding veterinary medicinal products and are also bound by the Rules of Racing.

Furthermore it is understood that if doping is not tackled effectively, there can be serious welfare issues. Unlike human athletes, horses have no choice in what is administered to them and may be at risk of serious side effects from the use of unlicensed, illegal medications of unknown provenance.

Science does not stand still and the pharmaceutical industry is continually seeking to introduce new pharmacological molecules, which can be very potent substances operating at very low trace levels. New drugs, possessing short half-lives but producing long lasting effects present significant challenges to traditional detection and policing systems. In addition, those who wish to use drugs for doping purposes can use novel administration routes and complex administration strategies in an effort to evade detection. Such new drugs and techniques are difficult to detect using old methods and this is a challenge which racing and breeding authorities worldwide are trying to come to terms with.

Recent events involving anabolic steroids inflicted significant reputational damage on the racing sector in Ireland and other countries. Due to concerns arising from high profile cases involving licenced individuals, the Board of Horse Racing Ireland, in conjunction with the Turf Club, established an industry-wide task force including representatives of HRI, the Turf Club, the Association of Irish Racehorse Owners, the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association, Irish Racehorse Trainers Association, Weatherbys Ireland and the Irish Sales Companies to consider this matter and to make recommendations to ensure that Ireland's drug testing regime for its racing and breeding sectors operates to the highest international standards.

The membership of the Task Force is set out in Appendix A, and the Terms of Reference of the Task Force were as follows:-

1. Review current drug testing processes in the Irish racing, breeding and sales sectors.
2. Receive observations, assessments, critiques, requirements and suggestions regarding the necessity and delivery of high quality drug testing systems for the racing, breeding and sales sectors from representatives of the trainers, owners, breeders and sales companies.
3. Review best practice internationally with particular emphasis on current and future policy developments in France and Great Britain as our nearest neighbours and trading partners.
4. Be appraised and updated by the Turf Club on proposed new IFHA guidelines in relation to doping control and laboratory accreditation.
5. Meet as deemed necessary relevant outside bodies or individuals, qualified by their expertise or experience to make contributions to the work of the Committee.
6. Review the current legal and regulatory environment in relation to animal medicines.
7. Review and make policy recommendations regarding the future needs of the industry, including the sales and breeding sectors.
8. Draw up a Memorandum of Understanding between the groups represented on the Task Force to set out what is expected from each group in relation to doping control.

## **FORMAT OF THE REPORT**

Medication and doping control in horseracing are broad and complex issues. The first part of this report gives some context to the issues involved, and the second section highlights the findings of the Task Force and makes recommendations to improve the overall coordination and resourcing of a robust anti-doping strategy.

### **Part 1**

## **INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON MEDICATION AND DOPING CONTROL IN HORSERACING**

Ireland (through the Turf Club and Horse Racing Ireland) works closely with our counterparts in other racing jurisdictions, most particularly through membership of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA). On the regulatory front the Turf Club is a full member of, and actively participates in, the work of the European Horserace Scientific Liaison Committee (EHSLC), the International Group of Specialist Racing Veterinarians (IGSRV) and the Association of Official Racing Chemists (AORC).

It is the specific remit and responsibility of the Turf Club to draw up and regularly review the Rules of Racing, and to be directly responsible for the ancillary integrity and forensic laboratory services. The rules governing medication and doping control in racing have evolved over time and are constantly under review. Racing jurisdictions also attempt as far as possible to reciprocate rules in this area.

Although the IFHA has no regulatory powers of enforcement, it publishes annually an International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering (IABRW) recommending best practice in certain areas, including medication and doping control. Member countries that have adopted articles of the IABRW undertake to make provision in their rules to implement these articles. Member countries can also implement rules that exceed the requirements of IABRW articles, as Ireland has done in certain instances.

Ireland is a full signatory to Article 6 of the International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering, which has been adopted in whole by 46 (and in part by 9) members of the IFHA. This article covers the biological integrity of the horse. Its preamble states:

### *ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS*

*Race horses are prohibited from racing with any prohibited substance in their bodies. Modification of the heritable genome of a Thoroughbred at any time of its life will disqualify such a horse being considered any longer as a Thoroughbred in racing or competition activities. No racehorse used for racing may be subjected to the prohibited practices specified in this article. Sick or injured race horses must be treated and/or rested as appropriate for their condition before returning to full training.*

## GENERAL PROVISIONS

*All therapies for a horse involved in racing or race training (including rest periods) should be based upon a specific diagnosis, administered in the context of a valid and transparent owner-trainer-veterinarian relationship, and given in the interests of the horse's health and welfare.*

*Following any therapy given to a race horse, a sufficient period should elapse prior to racing such that the therapy (i) is not capable of giving the horse an advantage or causing it to be disadvantaged contrary to the horse's inherent merits or (ii) is detrimental to its welfare.*

*No therapies should be administered on the day of the race to a horse without the authorization of the Horseracing Authority.'*

Article 6A (Prohibited Substances) then states as its objective:

*'to protect the integrity of horseracing and the welfare of the horse through controlling the use of substances capable of giving a horse an advantage or causing it to be disadvantaged in a race, contrary to the horse's inherent merits.'*

Article 6A also contains a list of prohibited substances. These substances may not be found in post-race samples. They may be administered in training, provided the context is a valid owner-trainer-vet relationship and such administration in training is in the interests of the horse's health and welfare.

Article 6E deals with Out Of Competition Testing (OOCT) and lists substances which are prohibited at all times, both in and out of competition.

Thus, within horseracing worldwide, a distinction is made between therapeutic medication, administered in the interests of the health and welfare of the horse but which must have cleared the system by race day, and substances, the administration of which fall under the definition of 'doping'.

Separating genuine therapeutic medication from deceitful use of illegal performance-enhancing drugs to boost performance is probably the most difficult integrity aspect of running a totally clean sport. It is also vital that the public can understand the difference.

Anabolic steroids have been used by human athletes to gain an unfair advantage because at high doses they increase muscle mass, strength and aggression. They also enhance recovery, allowing athletes to train harder. Anabolic steroid use is banned at all times in human athletics, both in and out of competition.

In October 2013, the IFHA Executive Council confirmed that it was their position that anabolic steroids have no place in horse racing and should not be permitted either in or out of competition.

In 2014, Article 6 of the IABRW was amended to cover out of competition testing. Anabolic steroids were also listed as substances prohibited at all times in IABRW Article 6E.

## **IRISH RULE CHANGES**

In tandem with the modifications to the IABRW and the new British Horseracing Authority (BHA) Equine Anti-Doping Rules, the Turf Club's Rules of Racing were extended in February 2015 to cover testing of horses before they are returned in training.

The definition of 'horse' in the Rules has been amended to include all horses from time of registration with Weatherbys. 'Owner' in the Rules has been amended to include the person registered as the owner/breeder with Weatherbys.

Should a horse test positive for a substance prohibited at all times, there is no defined stand-down period and any restriction from running is to be determined in each case by the Referrals Committee of the Turf Club, but in any event it will not be less than 14 months.

The owner or trainer of a horse that tests positive for a substance prohibited at all times will be liable to serious sanctions, including withdrawal of a training licence, disqualification (in the case of a horse) and substantial fines. If an owner refuses access to a horse for testing purposes, they will be in breach of the Rules of Racing and may be asked to appear before the Referrals Committee.

Ireland has legislation relating to Transfer of Ownership for horses, and also Equine Premises regulations. The Turf Club introduced a Rule in February 2015 requiring owners to comply with this legislation.

## **BRITISH RULE CHANGES**

In February 2015 the BHA published new Equine Anti-Doping Rules. The new BHA 'zero-tolerance' policy on anabolic steroids (and other substances prohibited at all times) extends their jurisdiction over horses from the time they are registered with Weatherbys, and includes the owner/ breeder of the young horse (pre-training) within the ambit of the Rules of Racing so that if a foal or yearling tests positive for a substance prohibited at all times the owner/breeder is deemed to be the Responsible Person who would be pursued by the BHA. To copper-fasten this, the breeder must sign a declaration at the time of registration of the horse stating that they agree to be bound by the Rules of Racing as they relate to anti-doping and confirming that the horse has not been administered a substance prohibited at all times at any point in its life.

Any horse testing positive for a substance prohibited at all times will face a stand-down period of 14 months (12 months out of training and two months in training but prohibited from racing) from the date of the positive sample.

Any horse arriving in Britain to race must be there a minimum of 10 business days before the race in which it is entered to enable sample collection and testing. This requirement is waived for horses arriving from Ireland, France, Germany, Sweden and Hong Kong because these countries are deemed to have 'mirror' policies.

The criteria for 'mirror' policies are:

*No anabolic steroids (or other IFHA International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering Article 6E substances) are permitted to be administered at any time from birth until permanent retirement from racing.*

*No therapeutic use exemption is permitted.*

*Horses are subject to testing from foal until permanent retirement from racing regardless of their whereabouts.*

## **Part 2**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE IRISH THOROUGHBRED INDUSTRY ANTI-DOPING TASK FORCE**

The Task Force met on seven occasions. The membership is shown at Appendix A, and the Terms of Reference were highlighted in the introduction. Prior to the first Task Force meeting a number of documents were circulated as background reading and during the course of its deliberations members were encouraged to make submissions and circulate other material they considered relevant. External speakers were invited to address the Task Force and their input was extremely valuable. All deliberations of the Task Force were confidential – this enabled a full and frank discussion of all the issues involved.

The composition of the Task Force was unique in that all segments of the production cycle of the Thoroughbred racehorse in Ireland were represented. It was the strong belief of the Task Force members that a robust anti-doping framework involving all participants was fundamental to the reputation of the Irish racing and breeding industry internationally.

Inevitably the impact of the new BHA Equine Anti-Doping Rules was one important consideration for the Task Force. The requirement for 'mirror policies' had already been met by the amendments to the Turf Club Rules of Racing, and it was agreed by all members that such reciprocity was vital to maintain free movement of Irish-trained horses running in Britain.

It was also clear to Task Force members that other aspects of medication and doping control needed in-depth discussion if a robust anti-doping framework was to be developed. These were considered under the following headings:

1. Equine Forensic Unit
2. Out-of-Competition Testing
3. Anabolic Steroids
4. Forensic Intelligence
5. Education and Communication

## **(1) EQUINE FORENSIC UNIT**

Drug testing in Irish horseracing is carried out by an accredited laboratory appointed by the Turf Club. The laboratory is appointed on the basis of a competitive tender process supervised by an independent evaluation committee. Funding for the equine forensic work of the Turf Club is provided by Horse Racing Ireland as part of the annual integrity services budget.

In late 2014 Horse Racing Ireland, with the agreement of the Turf Club, commissioned Dr Terence Wan, Chief Analyst with the Racing Laboratory of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, to carry out a comprehensive review of equine drug testing facilities in Ireland. It was agreed that this review should inform long-term decisions on the future for drug testing in the Irish racing and breeding sectors, including the level and type of investment that will be required to meet new IFHA accreditation standards currently being developed. The report was delivered in mid-2015 and its recommendations were considered by the Task Force.

The Task Force fully supports the importance of the Irish racing and breeding industries having access to an equine forensic laboratory that meets the best international standards so as to ensure a robust anti-doping strategy. That laboratory should be based in Ireland and operate under either a permanent relationship with, or a long-term support from, the Irish racing authorities.

To make the best use of expensive equipment and to achieve operational efficiency, a minimum of 8,000 samples should be analysed each year (currently 3,200), with both blood and urine samples to be collected and analysed.

The objective should be the operation of a single national drug control laboratory for all equine activities, as well as offering a drug control service to overseas racing nations. In time, the possibility of extending testing to include the greyhound sector, if appropriate, could also be considered.

The Task Force was informed that preliminary talks are underway with a view to establishing 4-5 IFHA Reference Laboratories worldwide. It was the view of the Task Force members that, in the medium term, an Irish laboratory should aspire to being classified as an IFHA Reference Laboratory. This will require significant investment over a period of years, as well as clarity over the qualification criteria and protocols, particularly relating to sample volume, which are currently being developed by the IFHA.

Task Force members heard presentations outlining trends in equine doping worldwide. The wider range of drugs involved, newer routes of administration and the lower levels of detection required, all mean that in future access to an appropriately funded and well-equipped laboratory is vital. A suggestion was made that samples collected by the Turf Club could be stored in anticipation of the development of newer test methods in the future. There are legal complexities associated with prosecution based on stored samples, but at a minimum, testing of such samples could give forensic intelligence and guide investigations.

Ireland, through the EHSLC, has participated in research in this area in the past. There will be a need for continued research in this area, which will require an ongoing funding commitment.

A number of members asked that consideration be given to providing an 'elective testing' service at the laboratory. Such facility is available in other jurisdictions. However, it is important that such testing is not used to 'test' the laboratory's capabilities and therefore strict conditions should apply: in particular the laboratory should only test for the indicated substances, and any negative report from an elective test would not override the results from a sample taken under the Rules of Racing.

The Task Force noted that some racing jurisdictions (e.g. Racing New South Wales and France) are developing the use of Equine Biological Passports as part of their anti-doping strategy. This involves serial blood sampling of horses and monitoring red blood cells, biomarkers (indicators that a drug has had an effect, rather than the presence of the drug itself) and the horse's genetic 'fingerprint' over time.

This methodology has the advantage that, instead of the need to develop a new detection method each time a new doping threat emerges, a physiological baseline is established for each athlete and deviations can be identified by repeated sampling. This is new technology in equine doping control (although used successfully in human athletics and cycling), and it is expected that there will be significant logistical issues associated with its introduction, but it may become a significant component of future equine anti-doping strategies worldwide.

A number of countries have introduced hair sampling as part of their testing regime. Its chief advantage is that it can be used to identify historic administration of prohibited substances. Hair analysis is in its infancy and the Task Force noted that there are a certain matters to be addressed prior to its wider use. These include:-

- reliability and validity of hair sampling
- liability in the case of positive findings
- costs of testing
- logistics of analysis (particularly where there is a shortage of accredited laboratories with enough capacity to carry out analyses in a timely manner)

Many of these concerns could not be addressed directly by the Task Force itself, but it was noted that no jurisdiction is currently relying exclusively on a positive hair test in prosecuting a case. Nonetheless, it was recognised that the fact that hair sampling may now be used by regulators will in itself be a significant deterrent to would-be cheats.

The Task Force notes and supports the Turf Club's plans to establish a dedicated Anti-Doping Unit, headed up by an Anti-Doping and Equine Welfare Officer. Its functions would include oversight of the Equine Forensic Unit; monitoring of developments in testing technology; development and implementation of a strategy for increased out-of-competition testing; and communication with stakeholders in the racing and breeding industry.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**For the future the Irish racing and breeding industries must have access to a laboratory which meets the best international standards so as to ensure a robust anti-doping strategy.**

**The laboratory should be based in Ireland and operate under either a permanent relationship with, or a long-term support from, the Irish racing authorities.**

**There should be a significant increase in the number of samples collected and analysed each year to achieve operational and cost efficiencies.**

**A single equine national drug control laboratory should be considered.**

**In the medium term Ireland's laboratory should aspire to being classified as an IFHA Reference Laboratory.**

**Ongoing research into new and emerging threats in equine doping must be supported, including collaboration with other racing laboratories.**

**The development of an Equine Biological Passport by other jurisdictions should be monitored for potential application in Ireland. Likewise, developments in hair testing methodologies should be monitored with the intention of it being introduced by the Turf Club as soon as it is scientifically and technically feasible to do so.**

**The Turf Club should establish a dedicated Anti-Doping Unit, headed up by an Anti-Doping and Equine Welfare Officer, to oversee developments in this area and to co-ordinate future strategy.**

## **(2) OUT-OF-COMPETITION TESTING**

Anti-doping agencies in all sports are aware that doping has become increasingly sophisticated world-wide. In horse racing, individuals who want to cheat the system are well aware of the scope of post-race testing and are likely to turn to doping in training, either to confer an advantage in preparation for competition and/or to use 'hit and run' drugs, with a short detection period but extended duration of action. These drugs can be given in training, will disappear from the horse's system in a matter of days but the effects will persist. To detect such drugs requires increased frequency of Out Of Competition Testing (OOCT).

One of the most difficult aspects of an anti-doping strategy is to measure the prevalence of doping. Studies in human athletes have suggested that it is likely that the percentage of positive tests may be significantly lower than the number of athletes who dope. In human athletics a combination of carefully designed surveys, based on methodologies developed in social science, and identification of putative markers of doping in test samples are used to design testing strategies. Consideration is also given to the unique subcultures of certain sports and whether doping has been 'normalised' in such subcultures.

The Task Force is not aware of this approach having been undertaken in racing anti-doping strategies, but it is suggested that this area might be explored further.

The Task Force recommends that the testing programme be evaluated using statistical modelling so as to specifically define the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its goals. Such analysis would assist the decision making process, optimise the use of resources and allow the Irish programme to be compared with similar testing programmes in other jurisdictions.

Amendments to the Rules of Racing extend the potential scope of OOCT to horses at all stages from the time of registration with Weatherbys. Such extension relates to substances prohibited at all times, and any testing of horses before they enter training would be for these substances only. Potential purchasers of young stock require assurances that the horses they purchase have not been given substances which are prohibited at all times under the Rules of Racing. Potential difficulties with the extension of the scope of OOCT to horses that have not entered training include:-

- Establishing the location at all times of a horse
- Obtaining permission from the owner/agent to sample a horse

Any regulatory regime needs to know the location of animals – the Equine Premises Regulations (SI 113 of 2014) require that all premises where horses are kept must be registered and the keeper/owner of premises must keep a record of animals on the premises and movements on and off. Buyers of horses are also obliged to register the change of ownership within 30 days under Transfer of Ownership legislation (SI 601 of 2014) or face significant penalties. Both of these legal requirements are strong links in the chain provided that enforcement is adequate. New EU Regulations requiring all member states to have a centralised equine database will apply from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. This will support and complement the Equine Premises and Change of Ownership registration.

Under Turf Club Rules, a horse is any Thoroughbred registered with Weatherbys (i.e. the Rules include foals once they are registered). The Stewards have powers (under Rule 20 (xviii) 2) to authorise an official to take a sample from a horse at any time and in any location. This would include foals, once registered with Weatherbys. The Task Force would support the position whereby all Irish foals would be registered prior to 31st July in their year of birth.

Regulation R14 of the Turf Club Rules sets out the procedure for taking of samples from horses. Section 7 of this Regulation relates to horses whose location is unknown, and states that written notice of intention to test a horse shall be made to the registered owner, who will be requested to inform the Turf Club of the location of the horse within 5 days. Should this information not be provided, the horse may incur a 'missed test', and the matter referred to the Referrals Committee which may impose sanctions as it deems appropriate.

Section 8 relates to horses whose location is known: in this case a notice of intention to test will be sent to the owner, requesting that the horse be made available for testing on a specified day and time. If the horse is not made available, this may be deemed a 'missed test' and the matter referred to the Referrals Committee which may impose sanctions as it deems appropriate.

Rule 88 requires owners to comply with the legal requirements regarding Transfer of Ownership (Weatherbys must be informed within 30 days of any transfer) and the keeping of horses at Registered Equine Premises.

Thoroughbreds may move many times in their life prior to entering training, and identification of the owner may prove complex. For this reason, the Task Force supports the approach taken by the Turf Club, whereby the horse is the main 'target', in an effort to ensure a level playing field and not allow horses which may have been given substances prohibited at all times to enter competition.

It should be noted that, according to information supplied by the Irish sales companies, to date no horses have tested positive for anabolic steroids on post-sale testing (6,388 elective samples returned negative results between 2011 and 2014). The Task Force expressed concern that forensic testing at sales is not currently harmonised and there is a lack of international standardisation between the laboratories performing this testing. It therefore recommends that this issue should be addressed as a priority by SITA (the Society of International Thoroughbred Auctioneers), the IFHA and the laboratories involved.

The Task Force recognises that full cooperation with OOCT on the part of all stakeholders is vital for the reputation of the Irish racing and breeding industries. It also recognises that before horses enter training, there are a number of 'control points' where additional reassurance can be built in.

These would include:-

1. An owner's declaration at the time of foal registration that the foal has not been and will not be administered any substance prohibited at all times while in their care.
2. An owner's declaration on the sales entry form (foal/yearling/2yo/horse in training/ NH store) that the horse had not been administered any substance prohibited at all times whilst in their care.
3. An owner's agreement at sales entry that they will allow an Irish domiciled horse so entered to be subject to random testing by the Turf Club under its OOCT programme between the time of publication of the sale catalogue and the sale itself.
4. An elective testing system whereby all horses can be tested for anabolic steroids post-sale at the purchaser's expense.

In addition to these control points, any horse could be subject to random testing before it enters training. The Task Force recommends that protocols be drawn up in conjunction with the ITBA as to how any testing on stud farms would be carried out.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**There should be increased frequency of Out Of Competition Testing (OOCT).**

**Statistical modelling should be performed on the Irish drug testing programme to optimise the use of resources and to maximise the efficacy of the programme in achieving its goals.**

**A standard declaration should be developed for use at time of foal registration, at sales entry, and at any time a horse changed ownership stating that the horse has not received anabolic steroids while in possession of the owner/agent.**

**Sales companies should introduce a requirement on sales entry forms that any horse entered for a sale is liable for testing under the Turf Club's OOCT programme.**

**Post-sale testing for anabolic steroids (at purchaser's expense) would continue to be available but as a matter of priority this testing methodology should be standardised between SITA, the IFHA and the laboratories providing this testing.**

**A protocol should be drawn up in conjunction with the ITBA on how testing on stud farms would be carried out.**

### **(3) ANABOLIC STEROIDS**

The Task Force firmly believes that the illicit administration of substances "prohibited at all times" merits a lifetime ban for any horses so treated. The fact that they are "prohibited at all times" means that there must be a commensurate and unique stringency in the punishment that sets these performance enhancing substances apart from other prohibited substances (most of which are therapeutic medicines).

The Task Force therefore proposes a lifetime ban for anabolic steroid offences, and also a complete prohibition on horses racing in Ireland that are found to have been illicitly administered anabolic steroids anywhere in the world.

Irish Thoroughbreds have a cleaner and better athletic image than many other international horses and the industry should do everything possible to retain that image. The Task Force therefore recommends that Ireland must close the door completely on the illicit use of anabolic steroids by ratcheting up our punishment levels through this introduction of a lifetime ban. It seems highly unfair and is certainly undesirable that a horse which received, for cheating purposes, illicit performance enhancing steroids in the past should be allowed back on the track to compete against clean horses at any future stage of its career. A life ban for any horse discovered to have been administered anabolic steroids illicitly would also have a significant deterrent impact.

The Task Force believes that there should be no automatic therapeutic use exemption. However, in the very rare and exceptional circumstances where a horse may need to be administered an anabolic steroid for therapeutic purposes, the Task Force recommends that an application for a lesser exclusion period could be considered by the Turf Club Referrals Committee. In the event of the application being successful, the exclusion period should be for a minimum of 14 months and the horse should not be allowed in a licensed trainer's yard for the first twelve months. This is to prevent any benefit from being trained after being administered steroids, thereby ensuring a level playing field. Any appeal to the Referrals Committee for a lesser exclusion period would require two minimum criteria:

(1) Any case of an anabolic steroid given therapeutically would have to be scrutinised rigorously in forensic detail, backed up and corroborated by provable evidence of a diseased state which necessitated only anabolic steroid treatment.

(2) In addition, the Turf Club would have to be notified immediately at the time of anabolic steroid treatment and the horse would have to be made available for inspection/testing at all times during its exclusion period.

The core issue is to keep dopers out of Irish racing permanently and also at the same time to ensure that Ireland's anti-doping policy acts as a severe deterrent to any would-be anabolic steroid abusers.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A lifetime ban should be introduced for any horse found to have been illicitly administered any “substance prohibited at all times” including anabolic steroids. This lifetime ban on racing in Ireland would be applied to any horses illicitly administered any “substance prohibited at all times” anywhere in the world.**

**There should be no automatic therapeutic use exemption for anabolic steroids.**

**A lesser exclusion period (of at least 14 months) could be considered through an appeal process to the Turf Club Referrals Committee in the very rare occurrence where a horse may need to be treated with an anabolic steroid for provable therapeutic reasons, subject to strict notification criteria and subsequent regular monitoring.**

#### **(4) FORENSIC INTELLIGENCE**

To ensure the most effective use of resources, a strategic approach to testing is required. This has two key aspects: the identification of aspects of racing and breeding that may be most at risk from doping, and the monitoring of new and emerging threats.

Forensic intelligence depends on (but is not limited to):-

- deep inside knowledge of the industry
- evaluation of historical trends
- monitoring of patterns of horses’ and yards’ performances
- strategic monitoring of the internet
- cooperation with outside agencies such as DAFM, Customs & Excise and An Garda Siochana

The Thoroughbred sector is a major contributor to livestock exports and thus DAFM have a strategic interest in assisting with a robust anti-doping strategy. The Task Force was reassured that there is cooperation between the Turf Club and DAFM on operational matters and strongly believes that ongoing, high-level communication between the Turf Club, HRI and DAFM is vital, especially since DAFM officials have significant powers of search and seizure where illegal drugs are involved.

DAFM also has responsibility for the equine premises legislation and for the recently introduced rules surrounding change of ownership. These offer a significant opportunity for traceability of horses, a cornerstone of any anti-doping policy.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**All organisations that are represented on the Task Force should commit to continue to pass on any information they become aware of about the importation and/or use of illegal drugs to either the Turf Club or the DAFM immediately.**

**The Turf Club should continue to meet with DAFM and HRI officials on a regular basis to exchange information and ensure all synergies are explored.**

## **(5) EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION**

One of the objectives of a successful anti-doping strategy must be to ensure that all stakeholders understand the implications of doping for the horses involved, and for the integrity of racing, which in turn impacts on Ireland's standing as a leading nation for breeding and racing.

Educational efforts must include all stakeholders, from breeders to trainers, grooms and stud-hands to owners and jockeys. The message should be clear and concise – that doping is cheating and affects all participants in the racing and breeding industry.

There are already a number of educational opportunities for industry participants, such as:-

- training courses mandated by the Turf Club for applicants for trainers' and jockeys' licences.
- further education courses (PLC, diploma and degree courses offered by ETBs, colleges and universities)
- educational events organised for breeders by the ITBA
- self-directed learning via industry media (e.g. The Irish Field)

The work of the Task Force was greatly assisted by the fact that all segments of the Irish breeding and racing industry were represented in the compilation of this report. Such dialogue between the racing and breeding sectors was not evident in the immediate aftermath of the anabolic steroid scandals, and the Task Force would strongly support the creation of a formal forum for dialogue between the IFHA and the breeding industry.

It is envisaged that the work of the Task Force will be completed with the delivery of this report. However, to maintain momentum, it would be worthwhile for the group to reconvene in six months to consider how matters have progressed.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A basic education module covering the principles behind the anti-doping strategy should be developed and disseminated to all education providers in the racing and breeding industry.**

**The Turf Club should produce guidelines for new anti-doping rules and develop formalised regular educational programmes for trainers and the breeding industry regarding the implementation of these rules.**

**A formal forum for dialogue between the IFHA and the breeding industry should be established.**

**The Task Force should be reconvened in six months to review progress with the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report.**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **IRISH THOROUGHBRED INDUSTRY ANTI-DOPING TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP**

1. Meta Osborne, MVB, CertESM, MRCVS (Chairperson)
2. Eimear Mulhern (Horse Racing Ireland nominee)
3. Brian Kavanagh (Horse Racing Ireland nominee)
4. John Weld, MVB, MRCVS (Association of Irish Racehorse Owners)
5. Dr Brendan Doyle, MB, BCh (Association of Irish Racehorse Owners)
6. John Power (co-opted by the Association of Irish Racehorse Owners)
7. John O'Connor, MRCVS (Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association)
8. Des Leadon, MA, MVB, MSc, FRCVS, DipECEIM (Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association)
9. Dr Tom Barragry, PhD, MSc, MVB, MRCVS, DipECVPT (Turf Club)
10. Denis Egan (Turf Club)
11. John Oxx, MVB, MRCVS (Irish Racehorse Trainers Association)
12. Michael Halford (Irish Racehorse Trainers Association)
13. Neil Walsh (Tattersalls Ireland)
14. Ronan Griffin (Goffs)
15. Ronan Murphy (Weatherbys Ireland)
16. Jason Morris (Horse Racing Ireland)