

## **INTRA-ARTICULAR ADMINISTRATION OF CORTICOSTEROIDS**

The BHA would like to draw the attention of trainers, veterinary surgeons and other participants to its published advice regarding the intra-articular administration of corticosteroids.

Corticosteroids, including triamcinolone acetonide (TCA), methylprednisolone acetate, betamethasone and dexamethasone, are [prohibited substances](#) on raceday - [19. Prohibited List Code](#).

Whilst the use of these medications is permitted in training when indicated for the treatment of an appropriately diagnosed veterinary condition, there is a strict liability of the Trainer to ensure no prohibited substance is present in a horse's body system(s) on raceday.

### **Stand-down period**

The BHA requires a mandatory 14 clear days stand-down period from racing following administration of any intra-articular corticosteroid:

*"The horse must not have been administered any intra-articular corticosteroid on the day of the race or on any of the 14 clear days before the day of the race in which the horse is declared to run."* ([Running Requirements Code](#), 7.1)

This stand-down period is a **minimum mandatory period** following administration of an intra-articular corticosteroid before which a horse can race. This mandatory stand-down period should not be confused with a detection time or with a withdrawal period (see below).

### **Detection times**

When corticosteroids are administered by any route, particularly into joints, there is potential for considerable variation in excretion times. Whilst the following list is **non-exhaustive**, any of the following may affect the excretion time:

- The corticosteroid administered
- Site of administration (i.e. which joint)
- Dose per joint and overall dose 'per horse'
- Degree of pathology or inflammation within the joint
- Concurrent administration of additional medications (e.g. amikacin, hyaluronic acid)
- Injection technique (e.g. accidental administration into surrounding soft tissues)
- Injection into deep ligamentous, muscular or fibrous tissue

The above factors make it extremely difficult to establish a single detection time that can be relied upon safely by Trainers and vets. As such, the BHA does not publish detection times for any intra-articular corticosteroids.

As a guide, the BHA is aware of data from studies in horses with non-diseased joints, which indicate that if a total dose of 10 mg of TCA alone were injected intra-articularly on one occasion beyond the 14-day stand-down period, it would be unlikely to result in an adverse analytical finding (a "positive") on raceday.

This data should not be used in isolation from the other guidance provided for in this note. To be clear, there is NO Published Detection Time for intra-articular corticosteroids and the mandatory 14-day stand-down period should not be used as a detection time. Given the strict liability of the Trainer to ensure no prohibited substance is present in a horse's body system(s) on raceday, Trainers and their veterinary surgeons should take into account the above factors when deciding upon an adequate withdrawal period following the intra-articular administration of corticosteroids.

**Withdrawal periods**

The difference between a detection time and a withdrawal period should be understood, as the two are different. To decide a withdrawal period, an adequate safety margin should be added to a detection time.

This safety margin should be chosen by the treating veterinary surgeon, using their professional judgement, and should take into account potential biological, pharmaceutical and pharmacological variation. This clearly makes a discussion between a Trainer and their veterinary surgeon essential when considering administration of any medication which is a prohibited substance on raceday.

**Elective testing**

Trainers who wish to establish that medication given for essential veterinary treatment has cleared from a horse's system before a race are invited to contact the BHA's [Anti-Doping Department](#) to request elective testing

We advise that submissions for elective testing can only be made once a horse holds an entry for a race and, for intra-articular corticosteroid medication, only after the minimum 14-day stand-down period has elapsed.

The elective testing request for approval form is available to download [here](#). This should be completed and returned to the BHA at: [anti-doping@britishhorseracing.com](mailto:anti-doping@britishhorseracing.com). The cost of elective testing is £214.26+ VAT for a two-day turnaround time and £142.84 + VAT for a four-day turnaround time to report results.

The elective testing sample submission form is available [here](#). Once the elective testing is approved by the BHA, this form should be completed and submitted, along with the sample, to the address provided.