DRUG WITHDRAWAL TIMES FOR PERFORMANCE HORSES

SOME BACKGROUND

All drugs should be administered appropriately to treat disease and recognised conditions of horses, yet many of them have the ability to affect the athletic performance of the animal or leave residues in tissues. The primary reasons for having rules relating to drug administration to performance horses is to ensure fair competition and to protect the welfare of the horses and the riders.

Due to the range of dosages (depending on disease, condition or severity), variation in elimination rates between individual animals and differences in drug testing methods available it is very difficult for vets to accurately advise owners, riders or trainers when it is safe to compete their horse after it has been given a drug for an appropriate medical reason.

The following all have an effect on drug withdrawal time:

- Total drug dose (total amount of drug given to the horse)
- Route of administration: a drug given by the intravenous route is cleared from the body more rapidly than the same drug given by the oral route. However, some drugs can bind to the gut wall, horses may spit some of the oral drug out into water or feed and consume at a later time than thought.
- Biological variation between horses e.g. age, sex, size, metabolism etc....
- Elimination rate (known as the half life) of the individual drug
- Degree of fitness, any recent history of illness or disease etc....

DETECTON VS WITHDRAWL TIMES!

The detection time is the approximate period of time for which a drug (or its metabolite) remains in the horse’s system such that it can be detected by laboratory tests and is only provided as a guide.

The withdrawal time for a drug must be decided upon by the administrating/prescribing vet and is based on the detection time plus a reasonable safety margin.

So here goes! Suggested withdrawal times for a few of the more common drugs administered/prescribed by our practice:

- Phenylbutazone (“Bute”) oral or i/v 10 days
- Flunixin (Finadyne®) i/v 9 days
- Metacam® 6 days
- Mepivacaine or Lidocaine (local anaesthetics) 7 days
- Sputolosin® 8 days
- Ventipulmin® oral nebulised 19 days
- Buscopan® 5 days
- Detomidine/Butorphenol combo (sedative) 6 days
- Prednisolone 8 days
- ACP®/Sedalin® (sedatives) 8 days

The above is a GUIDE ONLY, it is important to consult with a vet regarding individual cases. Whilst wormers and antibiotics (EXCEPT PROCAINE PENICILLIN) have no withdrawal times, they may influence the clearance of other drugs being administered at the same time from the horses body.