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Open letter

German equine veterinarians demand change of regulations at the FEI

The positive doping cases in horses during the Olympic Games at Athens and Hong Kong, as well as the current publication of detection times of important drugs, induced the GPM (Gesellschaft für Pferdemedizin; “society for equine medicine”) in Germany to repeatedly critically discuss the regulations of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI).

After 2004 the regulations, concerning medication of horses before and during international competitions had been changed drastically. In this context, among other things, the ”medicine box“ as well as detection times for some drugs were defined and published (last updated: June 5th 2008).

As a result of these changes the possibility to use drugs in horses, just before a competition, which are able to mask physical illness and psychical distress by covering its symptoms, was made capable. This fact is highly important for the use of glucocorticoids, considering the way these drug are mentioned in the current list of detection times.

That means: Due to glucocorticoids, symptoms of chronic, but also of acute illness, are suppressed. These effects of glucocorticoids are lasting both, during training and competition. Among other things, this leads to the fact, that horses do not receive enough time to recover until they are sound.

According to the Code of Conduct of the FEI, the welfare of the horse is the paramount concern in equestrian sports. The changes of the Veterinary Regulations of the FEI, mentioned above, and their effects, are not in accordance with the veterinarian’s goal of animal welfare

With regard to the health and welfare of the horse the GPM appeals to the FEI, to reflect upon it’s regulations and – in accordance with the up-to-date level of veterinary scientific knowledge – to formulate the regulations appropriate to the horses demands.

The GPM is considering, among other things, as it’s task, to cooperate with the equestrian organisations and to contribute to the solution of acute problems, as it did in the past.

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