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Steroid study reveals wide variance in steroid residue

by [Frank Angst](#)

A Florida study of Thoroughbreds in training has revealed a wide variance in the time it takes anabolic steroids to pass completely from a horse's system.

Rick Sams, Ph.D., director of the racing laboratory at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Florida, believed the compounding process explains the variance, a result he did not expect from the study funded by the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium.

"I had no idea that there was going to be that much difference," Sams said. "We believe that the variability has to do with the variability of the products. We see variability here we had not expected."

While some brand-name equine anabolic steroids are available, it also is common for compounding companies to make steroids. The study tested blood samples of horses administered brand-name steroids and compounds. For instance, the steroid stanozolol, commonly known as Winstrol, currently is only available as a compound. Because the study showed less variance in brand-name anabolic steroids, Sams linked the compounds to the wide variance.

In the study of stanozolol compounds, the steroid was out of the system of most Thoroughbreds within 40 days. However, it cleared one horse's system in 21 days while lasting in a different horse for 56 days before it was completely gone.

Horses take less time flushing testosterone from their systems as the range there went from a minimum of ten days to a maximum of 28.

Boldenone (Equipose) saw a minimum of 91 days and maximum of 140. Sams noted that Equipose typically is administered in two doses and the second dose—even in amounts as small as one-tenth of the first dose—adds about 24 days to the detection time.

For nandrolone, the range was 28 to 77 days.

As currently written, Kentucky rules only allow anabolic steroids for horses out of racing, and trainers must report their use to the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission, which advises a 60-day withdrawal time and requires a clean test before a horse returns to racing. Kentucky's rules are similar to other anabolic steroid rules throughout the country.

Kentucky Horse Racing Commission Equine Medical Director Mary Scollay, D.V.M., noted the wide variation in how horses react to steroids should serve as a wake-up call for any trainers thinking about bending the rules.

"Horsemen should not use anabolic steroids in a racing setting," Scollay said.

The variance offers another reason for banning anabolic steroids from racing. The study indicates horses were being subjected to a Russian roulette of sorts with steroids varying in potency based on how the materials mix.

The Florida study used 26 Thoroughbreds—seven mares and 19 geldings—who were kept in training conditions.

Frank Angst is senior writer of THOROUGHBRED TIMES

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