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Foreign trainers to face increased drug scrutiny in Great Britain

by Jeff Lowe

The British Horseracing Authority will require foreign trainers to declare that their horses have not been treated with non-therapeutic substances before allowing them to race in Great Britain.

The policy will take effect January 1.

"We prohibit the use of performance-enhancing drugs," the authority said in a statement. "This includes any use of anabolic agents to increase muscle mass, such as certain types of steroid drugs, and the use of drugs for a 'partitioning' effect to increase muscle and reduce fat, such as seen in the misuse of bronchodilator drugs."

Clenbuterol is a commonly-used bronchodilator that is allowed at varying threshold levels in the United States.

British racing began testing for anabolic steroids in 1976. Until this year, Iowa was the only jurisdiction in the U.S. that regulated and tested for steroids. Ten other states have subsequently adopted anabolic steroid rules based on a model rule enacted by the Association of Racing Commissioners International.

"We need to make it abundantly clear that racing in Britain is both fair and safe," Tim Morris, director of equine science and welfare for the British Horseracing Authority. "There needs to be a level playing field for all trainers and owners and at the same time the welfare of the horse needs to be protected. Horses should only ever get the medication they need for treatment and be drug free on racedays.

"We will require a declaration from trainers of horses from outside Europe that they do not train, and have not ever trained, on non-therapeutic substances, and in particular on anabolic and partitioning agents," Morris continued. "All such horses are already tested before racing and we may also consider home-country testing in cooperation with other racing authorities. Other checks will be made to ensure we are aware of all imported and visiting horses.

"We wholeheartedly support international competition and welcome the move in the U.S. towards a harmonized model rule on the use of anabolic agents.