

# Race dogs given steroids, bad outcomes for many dogs

By Keaton Thomas

CREATED JUN 21, 2015

KGUN9-TV

TUCSON (KGUN9-TV) - Last month, Arizona state records show a dog trainer at Tucson Greyhound Park was fined and suspended for a dog that tested positive for a banned steroid.

Bob's Bess, a female greyhound, tested positive for Metandionone, an anabolic steroid. The drug is known to be used by body builders to gain muscle.

Bob's Bess finished first in her May 9th race. The Arizona Department of Racing took that victory away after the positive steroid test.

"Drug positive dogs are a very serious matter," said Christine Dorchak, CEO of Grey2k USA, an organization that monitors dog racing across the country. "Shooting dogs up with steroids is a bad thing. It shouldn't be done at Tucson Greyhound Park or anywhere else, and that's why its against the rules."

The issue at hand here is that these steroids may have been used as a way to fix races.

"This indicates that races at Tucson greyhound park are not being fairly run, people who are betting on the races, there is no integrity for them either," said Dorchak. She does give credit to the Arizona Department of Racing for disciplining the trainer.

Metandionone is a controlled substance by the Drug Enforcement Administration. It is illegal for anyone other than a doctor or veterinarian to administer the drug, and even they need a license.

Aside from just this drug, steroid use in dogs is still a concern for many accross Tucson and the country.

Dr. Janet Forrer is a veterinarian and contributed to helping ban steroid use for race dogs in Tucson. She says steroids can have positive use for dogs who are severely ill, but should not be used to improve performance. Dr. Forrer says these drugs keep female greyhounds from going into heat, essentially preventing them from getting pregnant.

"They can put them in the same kennel as a male dog, race them all the time, and of course there is that little bonus that they are going to be more muscular and fast," said Dr. Forrer.

Dr. Forrer also listed off a number of negative side affects in female race dogs. She has seen dogs that were given steroids and says they were found to have higher rates of bone cancer, along with heart, kidney, and liver problems.

Perhaps the most extreme side effects according to Dr. Forrer are genital problems, like Vaginitis.

"Just horrifying," she said. "It's swollen and ulcerated and red and they can't stop licking. It can be very difficult to treat."

She says these side effects probably due to steroids, but this does not get enough attention.

"It looks like one of the most miserable conditions you can imagine, but they're dogs." said Dr. Forrer. "They act so passive about it. I think it's why this problem doesn't get more attention. In the kennels, or in foster, or in people's home these dogs just deal with it. But it's a clear sign these drugs are affecting them."

Dr. Forrer says they are still looking into how these drugs affect dogs in the long run, but there is absolutely no reason for dogs to be given the drug.