



**American Association of Equine Practitioners**

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## Policy on Therapeutic Medications in Performance Horses

The AAEP policy on medication in performance horses is driven by our mission to improve the health and welfare of the horse. The AAEP policy is aimed at providing the best health care possible for the horses competing under the current rules in various disciplines throughout the United States and Canada while ensuring the integrity of the sport. The AAEP expects its members to abide by the rules of all jurisdictions where they practice. The AAEP condemns the administration of non-therapeutic or unprescribed medications to performance horses by anyone. The AAEP believes that all therapeutic medication should be administered to performance horses by or under the direction of a licensed veterinarian. Health care decisions on individual horses should involve the veterinarian, the trainer and the owner with the best interests of the horse as the primary objective. Veterinarians should be mindful of the fact that medication is not a substitute for good horsemanship.

The AAEP strongly encourages continued research in determining the therapeutic levels and appropriate withdrawal times that represent responsible use of medication in the competing horse. The AAEP is aware of the dynamics of the development of new products, as well as the continuing evaluation of current medications, and will continue to evaluate its policy based upon available scientific research and the best interests of the horse.

In order to provide the best health care possible for the performance horse, veterinarians should utilize the most modern diagnostic and therapeutic modalities available in accordance with medication guidelines designed to ensure the integrity of the sport. To this end, the following are the essential elements of the AAEP policy concerning veterinary care of the performance horse:

- It is recognized that various performance horse disciplines have differing regulations concerning medication guidelines. The AAEP urges members to abide by these regulations and to work with the governing bodies to develop and enforce such regulations. The establishment of guidelines backed by testing procedures with strict quality controls should be the goal to protect the integrity of the sport and the well being of the horse.
- The AAEP encourages proactive and constructive communication between regulatory bodies and practicing veterinarians and other industry stakeholders. The AAEP offers its expertise to all performance horse organizations for assistance in establishing medication guidelines for their respective disciplines.
- The non-therapeutic use of medications for the purpose of altering the performance of a horse should be forbidden. Stimulants, depressants and numbing agents present in a horse at the time of competition should be forbidden. It is recognized that some governing bodies allow for the emergency use of local anesthetics for strictly medical purposes within the normal withdrawal time for such agents. Such procedures must be very closely controlled.
- Products present in a horse at the time of performance that have been proven to interfere with accurate and effective post-performance testing should be strictly forbidden.
- The AAEP endorses the use of uniform testing procedures and the uniform interpretation of test results by all performance horse organizations. Detection of pharmacologically-insignificant levels of therapeutic medications should not constitute a violation of medication rules.
- Governing organizations have developed guidelines for the use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents in their sports. It is the opinion of the AAEP that the use of multiple such agents is not in the best interest of the health and welfare of the horse. Performance horse governing bodies are encouraged to regularly reevaluate their regulations in light of this recommendation.

- The AAEP believes that all veterinarians should use judicious, prudent and ethical decisions in all treatments to ensure the health and welfare of the horse.
- The AAEP endorses increased surveillance and enforcement of the above-mentioned regulations.

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