

Subject: Letter from Veterinarians Re: MPA

October 2, 2019

Dear Mr. Kessler and Dr. Schumacher,

Thank you in advance for your consideration of the sentiments below. The undersigned veterinarians hope that you will take into account the following as you make decisions regarding the US Equestrian's permissibility of the drug medroxyprogesterone acetate (MPA).

At this juncture it has become evident that the only value of MPA as a pharmaceutical is a reported mild quieting effect. It has been proven through extensive research that MPA does not control, suspend or mediate estrus in mares (1) and it serves no other positive medicinal effect.

In the event that the administration of the US Equestrian is unaware, the undersigned would like to alert you to a very unfortunate and tragic consequence which occasionally occurs following the administration of MPA. There are indisputable reports of sudden deaths of multiple horses in the United States, both at farms and at horse shows, after having been administered medroxyprogesterone. At the time of writing this letter there have been at least 15 sudden deaths in horses directly after having been given medroxyprogesterone. Although the authors of this letter have not been privy to medical and post mortem details of each case, we are aware that in each case the otherwise healthy horse died within seconds or minutes of intramuscular MPA. Because of the usually confidential nature of this type of information there is little documentation in medical journals or on social media, which leads us to suspect that sudden death following MPA administration is likely to be far more widespread than is currently understood. Additionally, there may be other undesirable side effects of MPA that are yet to be fully understood including but not limited to bone loss (2) and decreased blood calcium.

An additional area of concern is that media outlets might learn that a dangerous drug that has killed multiple horses is allowed and condoned by the US Equestrian. This could prove devastating to the organization and sport. The hunter/jumper community has of late been the target of front page critiques of equine athlete welfare, making it all the more imperative that we as members, constituents, competitors and veterinarians be proactive with respect to restricting the use of medroxyprogesterone.

Because the USEF continues to allow MPAs use, clients continue to want to purchase it and veterinary hospitals, clinics and compounding pharmacies continue to stock and sell it. We as veterinarians are under continued pressure to provide the drug as clients will use any avenue, including other veterinarians or online pharmacies, to procure it. We ask that the US Equestrian promptly follow the lead of Equestrian Canada and the FEI and prohibit the use of MPA in competition horses.

Competitors are continuously working to present horses with the relaxed look rewarded in the hunter ring and we recognize the value of mild quieting with respect to less lunging or other preparation. However we believe that that this drug that serves only to alter performance via quieting is not only against the spirit of the US Equestrian but is ultimately dangerous to the horse athlete that we all aim to protect.

It is our hope that the US Equestrian will take the lead and address these serious concerns. We, as veterinarians, are certain that the swift prohibition of MPA in competing horses will save horses lives and will help protect the integrity of our sport.

Please do not hesitate to call or email with any questions or if there is any further assistance can be provided.

Addendum:

We acknowledge that MPA is not the only horse quieting method that puts our patients at risk. We ask that the US Equestrian not simply enact a ban on one of those abusive practices. Rather, we ask that the US Equestrian engage in a constructive dialogue with respected industry professionals to better understand the rationale and to discuss practical and humane solutions so we can all fulfill our obligation to protect and promote the welfare of the horse.

6. Rahman M, Berenson A, "Predictors of Higher Bone Mineral Density Loss and Use of Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate," *Obstetrics & Gynecology* 2010; 115(1): 35-40.

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