

## DAYTONA BEACH KENNEL CLUB

# State suspends Daytona greyhound trainer for banned drug found in dog

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DAYTONA BEACH — A greyhound trainer at Daytona Beach Kennel Club & Poker Room has been suspended and fined by the state more than two years after one of his dogs tested positive for a prohibited painkiller.

The Department of Business & Professional Regulation Pari-Mutuel Wagering Division, which oversees commercial greyhound racing in Florida, suspended kennel operator Lance LaFreniere for 45 days and fined him \$500 after an investigation concluded that RJ's Miraclemary, a dog under LaFreniere's care, had been given the painkiller oxymorphone.



News-Journal/JIM TILLER

Greyhounds race at the Daytona Beach Kennel Club & Poker Room in Daytona Beach. A trainer recently was suspended 45 days and fined \$500 by the state after a banned painkiller was found in a dog's system in 2012.

LaFreniere, 47, said Friday he didn't give the dog the oxymorphone and that someone else with access to the greyhound could have given it the drug, perhaps accidentally.

"There is no way in hell I would do this to any of my dogs," he said. "I wouldn't give a dog anything like that."

State law holds kennel operators like LaFreniere responsible for any banned substances found in their dogs' systems. LaFreniere has been fined at least seven other times since 1996 for dogs that tested positive for banned substances.

The department filed its most recent complaint against LaFreniere and launched its investigation in February, nearly two years after the drug was found in the dog's urine in April 2012. The sample was taken from a department-ordered test before a race on March 23, 2012 and sent to state officials for examination later that month.

The department issued its findings and disciplined LaFreniere last month.

Activist Carey Theil, whose nonprofit group Grey2K USA seeks to end greyhound racing, said the state's delay in investigating LaFreniere constitutes a "regulatory failure."

"It is disturbing that this individual was allowed to work in the dog-racing industry for two years after a greyhound in his control tested positive for a serious drug," Theil said.

Tajiana Ancora-Brown, a spokeswoman with the department, said a case's facts dictate how long it takes the department to investigate the matter.

“Each investigation is unique, and although cases of this nature appear to be similar, each case can vary drastically based on the totality of factors involved,” she said. “This case reached an appropriate conclusion based on the evidence presented.”

A review of LaFreniere’s racing license history shows that he has been fined by the department 19 times since 1996 — including at least eight times for dogs that tested positive for banned substances. LaFreniere said he has been racing dogs in Daytona Beach for 20 years.

Records state he was fined \$100 and suspended for a month in 2003 after a greyhound tested positive for dimethyl sulfoxide — also known as DMSO — a controversial antioxidant sometimes used to help dogs recover after races.

In 2007, the state confiscated containers of rabies vaccine and penicillin found in a kennel operated by LaFreniere, according to records. He was also fined \$100 at that time.

LaFreniere said he didn’t give the dogs the drugs for which they tested positive in many of the cases reflected in the records. He chalked other, mainly older, positives up as rookie mistakes. And he said he didn’t think giving other medicines, like penicillin, to his dogs was wrong when he did it.

About 900 dogs are based at the kennel club. The club operates a dog track and poker room and has nine dog kennels it rents to independent operators.

The kennels are about a mile away from the track, and trainers drop the dogs off at the track to race. Greyhounds are usually left at the track for several hours by their trainers, LaFreniere said.

In April, nearly 100 greyhounds in one of the club’s kennels became ill from what some state investigators believe was food poisoning. Two of the dogs died. The state is still investigating the incident.

Kennel club manager Dan Francati said LaFreniere will be allowed to race at the track again once his state-ordered suspension is served.

“They’re gone for however long they’re gone,” Francati said of trainers who are suspended. “They do their time.”

Francati said that some infractions will get trainers banned from the kennel club, but he said they’re evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Typically, the track leaves discipline to the state, he said.

The kennel club regularly checks kennels for injectables and other contraband, Francati added.

“Lance typically runs a very good kennel,” Francati said.

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