

New Mexico Racing Commission Fines Owner \$15,000 for Connection to Clenbuterol Positives

The New Mexico Racing Commission (NMRC) recently utilized its ability to fine owners of horses when their horses are confirmed positive for illegal drugs. Owner Alberto Villanueva was fined \$15,000 recently for owning five Quarter Horses that proved positive for the prohibited substance Clenbuterol. Villanueva's problems started back in May of 2016 when he had horses under the care of a newly licensed trainer by the name of Sierra Moseley. Under Moseley's care, two of Villanueva's horses tested positive for Clenbuterol through the NMRC's enhanced out of competition testing program. The horse's names were Dyna O Mite and Burns Folly. According to the NMRC ruling, the horses were put on the Stewards list and ineligible to run for a period of 60 days, from June 11, 2016 through August 10, 2016. Once the horses were removed from the Stewards list, they were back to racing, now under the care of trainer Victor Rodriguez-Flores. Villanueva's problems would rapidly be compounded with his association to Rodriguez-Flores. By September 10, 2016, another one of Villanueva's horses, Woody Can Do, tested positive for clenbuterol at Zia Park in a postrace test. This would be Villanueva's third positive within a five month period. The agony did not stop there. On September 11, 2016 and September 25, 2016, Villanueva would pick up his fourth and fifth clenbuterol positives when his horses Dyna O Mite (sound familiar) and Delightning Teller, also under the care of trainer Victor Rodriguez-Flores proved positive in postrace tests.

According to New Mexico's Administrative Codes, the NMRC can penalize an owner up to \$5,000 after their second "penalty B" drug violation, which is the penalty category that Clenbuterol falls into. The Zia Park Stewards, led by longtime Presiding Steward Violet "Pinkie" Smith, ruled on the last three positives and felt comfortable in levying a \$5,000 fine for each additional violation for a total of \$15,000. Steward Smith said, "If this doesn't send a strong message, it should. If an owner doesn't change their way of thinking or does not put distance between them and a trainer with multiple drug violations, then I feel the owner is condoning the trainer's action". Villanueva has to be careful because any more Clenbuterol violations in the future can cost him at least \$5,000 each.

The NMRC has been at the forefront in the battle against the abuse of Clenbuterol in race horses and has recently taken some major strides in conjunction with industry stakeholders in fighting the abuse. NMRC Executive Director Ismael "Izzy" Trejo said, "With the implementation of our new 60 day Stewards list rule, Mr. Villanueva has lost valuable time and money in regards to these positives. After we put the horses in jail for 60 days, take the purses away and fine you, it all adds up".

The New Mexico Racing Commission exists to provide regulation in an equitable manner to New Mexico's pari-mutual horse racing industry to protect the interest of wagering patrons and the State of Mexico in a manner which promotes a climate of economic prosperity for horsemen, horse owners and race track managements.