ANTI-DOPING AND MEAT CONTAMINATION

Amendments to the World Anti-Doping Code (Code) will assist anti-doping organisations manage cases of potential clenbuterol meat contamination and ensure that cases are managed fairly for all athletes.

The concern

For a number of years anti-doping organisations have expressed concerns over contaminated meat in certain parts of the world, and emphasised the need for athletes to exercise extreme caution when eating meat while travelling for competitions or training overseas. These concerns focused on meat contaminated with the prohibited substance clenbuterol, which has led to the ban of athletes from sport.

The change

It has been scientifically established to the World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA) satisfaction that an athlete can test positive for clenbuterol at low levels following ingestion of contaminated meat in a small number of countries where this is an issue.

In May 2019 WADA’s Foundation Board approved an amendment to Article 7.4 of the Code, which allows laboratories and results management authorities (such as ASADA) to close as “no case to answer” matters involving athletes testing positive for clenbuterol when established that it is as the result of ingesting contaminated meat products.

The timeframe for the change

The amendment to Article 7.4 of the Code will come into force on 1 June 2019 and is an interim solution until the 2021 Code and the forthcoming International Standard for Results Management come into effect.

The change in detail

Prior to the amendment WADA-accredited laboratories reported analytical testing results for exogenous (having an external cause or origin) prohibited substances as Adverse Analytical Findings (AAF), but not as Atypical Findings (ATF).

The purpose of the amendment is to provide anti-doping organisations with the ability to conduct an investigation when low concentrations (below 5ng/mL) of identified prohibited substances that are known meat contaminants are detected by laboratories and reported as ATFs. For samples with concentrations equal to or above the threshold (5ng/mL) they will continue to be reported as an AAF.

The change ensures valid meat contamination cases are dealt with fairly and, notably, may prevent athletes from having their competition results disqualified as a result of eating contaminated meat.

The announcement is published on the WADA website.

Advice for Australian athletes

Australian athletes and sporting teams travelling to countries known to be affected by meat contaminated with substances on the prohibited list, such as clenbuterol, should consider:

• whether to eat meat, not only from an anti-doping perspective, but with regard to general health and well-being, and
• keeping records if travelling to China, Mexico and Guatemala, including:
  • dates of travel
  • accommodation
  • details of where meals were eaten (restaurant, address, date)
  • what types of meat were eaten and an estimate of quantity.