



INQUIRY INTO THE CARE AND WELFARE AFFORDED TO THOROUGHBRED HORSE MARTHA LAVINIA IN THE  
CARE OF LICENSED TRAINER MS FIONA SCHNEIDERS

**Racing NSW Head Offices**  
**Druitt Street, Sydney**  
**Via videoconference**

**24 December 2025**

**Stewards:**    **D R Hadley (Chair)**  
                  **M W Cleaver**  
                  **B J Clark**

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## **Background**

On 4 December 2025, the seven-year-old mare *Martha Lavinia*, which was under the care and control of licensed trainer Ms Fiona Schneiders, was identified as displaying a gait abnormality and/or lameness while being ridden by Ms Schneiders during track work at Murrumbidgee Turf Club.

Shortly thereafter, the mare was attended to by farrier Mr Daryl Perrot, who identified evidence consistent with a hoof abscess that had possibly ruptured. Mr Perrot also observed the presence of a quarter crack in the mare's left fore hoof, which had been subject to ongoing management for some time.

On the morning of 5 December 2025, Racing NSW Stewards attended track work at Murrumbidgee Turf Club and observed *Martha Lavinia* being ridden by Ms Schneiders. At that time, the mare exhibited an obvious gait abnormality and/or lameness in the near fore limb. As a result, Ms Schneiders was directed by Stewards to immediately dismount and return the horse to the stable.

Racing NSW Integrity subsequently commenced an investigation into the matter. As part of that investigation, interviews were conducted with the track supervisor, Mr Michael Lynch, farrier Mr Daryl Perrot, and Ms Schneiders.

On 6 December 2025, *Martha Lavinia* was examined by veterinarian Mr Bryan Hilbert, who assessed the mare as being 3–4/5 lame in the left fore limb. Mr Hilbert's findings were consistent with the presence of an active or resolving hoof abscess. It was also identified that previous veterinary examinations, including radiographic imaging, had revealed that the mare's left fore foot was affected by laminitis and had a poor prognosis.

Racing NSW Investigators obtained and reviewed relevant veterinary reports and treatment records relating to *Martha Lavinia*.

On 22 December 2025, Racing NSW Stewards opened an inquiry into the circumstances of the matter. A brief of evidence compiled by Racing NSW Investigator Ms Anna Tabet was tendered, and oral evidence was taken from Mr Michael Lynch, Mr Daryl Perrot, Ms Fiona Schneiders, Veterinarian Dr Bryan Hilbert and Racing NSW Official Veterinarian Dr Rose Bensley.

Stewards considered the evidence and issued one (1) charge against Ms Schneiders as detailed below.

Ms Schneiders entered a plea of guilty to the charge. The inquiry was adjourned to allow sufficient opportunity for Ms Schneiders to make submissions.

On Tuesday 23 December 2025, Ms Schneiders provided submissions which were considered.

### **Charge issued against Ms Fiona Schneiders**

#### **Charge 1: AR229(1)(b) - Improper action in connection with racing**

The details of the charge being that she did commit an improper action in allowing *Martha Lavinia* to exercise in the manner which she did on 5 December 2025, despite having been advised that *Martha Lavinia* had a lameness and/or gait abnormality during track work on 4 December 2025. Given the history of the horse, it was improper to have conducted the exercise without obtaining a veterinary assessment to identify the cause of the lameness and/or gait abnormality.

**Plea: Guilty**


**Finding: Guilty**

### **Penalty**

The following penalty considerations were taken into account –

- Pleas entered
- Contrition shown by Ms Schneiders and her willingness to accept responsibility for the breach
- Objective seriousness of the breach
- Precedent penalties
- Personal and professional circumstances
- Principles of specific and general deterrence and what message is sent to the industry in respect to such conduct
- The importance of equine welfare for the thoroughbred racing industry prior to, during racing and on retirement
- The purpose of issuing penalties as a protective measure for the image, interests and welfare of the thoroughbred racing industry

#### **Charge 1: AR229(1)(a) – 6 months suspension of licence**



Having regard to her guilty plea and other relevant considerations, Stewards ruled that the total period of suspension of 6 months be reduced to 4 months, to commence on 31 December 2025, and to expire on 31 April 2026.

Under the powers afforded by AR283(7), Stewards ordered the commencement of the penalty be deferred for a period of seven (7) days, however, during this period Ms Schneiders is not to start a horse in a race.

Ms Schneiders was advised of her appeal rights.

**Relevant Rules:**

***AR 229 Corruption, dishonesty and misleading behaviour***

*(1) A person must not:*

*(a) engage in any dishonest, corrupt, fraudulent, improper or dishonourable action or practice in connection with racing;*

**D R Hadley  
General Manager – Investigations  
Racing NSW**