RACING NSW – STEWARDS REPORT

INQUIRY INTO THE ANALYSTS FINDING OF MELOXICAM IN A POST-RACE BLOOD SAMPLE TAKEN FROM *HIGHLAND FORCE* AT COFFS HARBOUR ON THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2026 AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF A COBALT SALT INJECTABLE AT THE REGISTERED STABLE PREMISES OF LICENSED TRAINER MR JOHN SHELTON ON THE AFTERNOON OF MONDAY 12 OCTOBER 2026.

Grafton Racecourse **17 November 2026**

Stewards: **M. A. Holloway (Chair)**
M. G. Johnson

Racing NSW Stewards today conducted an inquiry into two analysts finding of Meloxicam in a blood sample taken from *Highland Force* following it finishing first in Race 8 Benchmark 58 Handicap 808m at Coffs Harbour racecourse on Thursday 3 September 2026. Further, the identification of a cobalt salt injectable at the registered stable premises of licensed trainer Mr J. Shelton on the afternoon of Monday 12 October 2026.

Evidence was taken from Mr J. Shelton, licensed stablehands Z. Skuthorpe-Dowell & A. Cahill, Racing NSW veterinary officers Dr R. Bensley & Dr C. Moore and ARFL General Manager J. Keledjian.

After considering all evidence, Stewards issued Mr Shelton the following charges –

Charge 1

AR240(2) – Prohibited substance in sample taken from horse at race meeting

The details of the charge being that he did present *Highland Force* to race in Race 8 Benchmark 58 Handicap 808m at Coffs Harbour racecourse on 3 September 2026 and a post-race blood sample taken from the mare was found to contain the prohibited substance Meloxicam.

Plea: Guilty
Finding: Guilty

Charge 2

AR252A - Possession of injectable products containing cobalt salts

The details of the charge being that on the afternoon Monday 12 October 2026 he did, at his registered stable premises, have a bottle of VAM injectable which is an injectable product that contains cobalt salts.

Plea: Guilty
Finding: Guilty

Charge 3

AR104(1) – Trainers must keep treatment records

The details of the charge being that he did fail to record the administration of Meloxicam to *Highland Force* on, or around, 30 August 2026. Further, that he did fail to record the route of administration, reason for administration and the name of the person administering medications and/or treatments to horses within his stable between 29 June 2026 and 11 October 2026.

Plea: Guilty
Finding: Guilty

Penalty

Stewards considered the following matters in respect to penalty.

1. The nature of the substances detected and the circumstances surrounding each offence.
2. Guilty pleas.
3. Poor disciplinary record regarding prohibited substance & treatment record offences.
4. Precedent penalties.
5. Personal and professional circumstances.
6. Principles of specific and general deterrence and what message is sent to the industry in respect to such conduct.
7. Purpose of issuing penalties as a protective measure for the image and interests of the thoroughbred racing industry.

Charge 1 – Five (5) month suspension of Mr Shelton's trainers license in full.

Charge 2 – $500 fine. Stewards did acknowledge that the bottle of VAM identified had an expiry date of April 2022.

Charge 3 – One (1) month suspension of Mr Shelton's trainers license in full.

Stewards ordered that the penalties for Charges 1 and 3 be served cumulatively, being a six (6) month suspension of Mr Shelton's trainers license in full.

Under the powers of AR283(7), Stewards ordered the commencement of such penalty be deferred for seven (7) days to allow Mr Shelton to make the necessary arrangements for those horses within his stable. Such suspension to commence on Tuesday 24 November 2026 and to expire on Monday 24 May 2027.

Mr Shelton was made aware of his appeal rights.

Highland Force

Stewards, acting under the powers of AR240(1), disqualified *Highland Force* from its 1st placing in Race 8 Benchmark 58 Handicap 808m at Coffs Harbour on Thursday 3 September 2026 and amended the placings accordingly.

Relevant Rules

AR 240 Prohibited substance in sample taken from horse at race meeting.

(1) Subject to subrule (3), if a horse is brought to a racecourse and a prohibited substance on Prohibited List A and/or Prohibited List B is detected in a sample taken from the horse prior to or following its running in any race, the horse must be disqualified from any race in which it started on that day.

(2) Subject to subrule (3), if a horse is brought to a racecourse for the purpose of participating in a race and a prohibited substance on Prohibited List A and/or Prohibited List B is detected in a sample taken from the horse prior to or following its running in any race, the trainer and any other person who was in charge of the horse at any relevant time breaches these Australian Rules.

AR252A Possession of injectable products containing cobalt salts

(1) A person must not have in his or her possession, or on his or her premises, any injectable product which contains cobalt salts.

AR104 Trainers must keep treatment records

(1) A trainer must record any medication or treatment administered to any horse in the trainer's care by midnight on the day on which the administration was given.

AR283 Penalties

(7) A person or body authorise by these Australian rules to suspend or disqualify any trainer may defer the commencement of the period of suspension or disqualification for no more than 7 clear days following the day the suspension or disqualification was imposed, and upon terms and conditions considered fit.

M Holloway
Chief Steward (NRRA)