



DRUG TESTING – WHAT TO DO?

For many competitors who have ridden only at unsanctioned or EC Bronze competitions, having their horse called for drug testing is a new and sometimes confusing experience.

Equine Canada competitions now including Bronze, are required to provide space for the drug tester to examine and take urine samples from any horse chosen for testing. Drug Testers do not advise which competitions they will be attending, they are given dates by Equine Canada as to which competitions they must attend. The competition never knows ahead of time if a Drug tester will be in attendance.

Competitors need to be aware that their horse may be one of the randomly chosen horses for drug testing. The choosing is random; it is not based on the performance or placing of any horse. Usually at dressage competitions, the drug tester will review the order of go and pick horses to test after they have finished their final test of the day. Once chosen, the competitor, groom or person responsible, is required to comply with the drug testers request to take their horse and accompany her/him to the stall supplied by the competition for sample collection, they must witness the collection. The stall will have bedding supplied. The saddle and bridle are usually removed and just a halter and lead line left on the horse. The drug tester will try to get to know the horse to establish enough trust for the horse to urinate naturally. When this happens, the drug tester attempts to collect urine in a cup attached to a long stick.

Not all horses are comfortable urinating with people in the stall. When this happens, the drug tester decides how long they are prepared to wait before either giving up or, if a veterinarian is present, arrange for a blood sample to be taken.

Once the sample has been taken, the competitor, groom or person responsible must witness the sealing of the sample container and will be asked to sign documentation as supplied by the drug tester before it may be shipped to the official laboratory.

Once the sample has been taken, documentation signed and or the sample testing has been abandoned, then the competitor and horse may return to their usual activities. The amount of time taken for this procedure is dependent on the willingness of the horse to urinate but as a guideline, one should anticipate that it might take at least an hour.

The official sample testing and analysis is governed by procedures governed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Remember that although this process may seem inconvenient, it is intended to be for the welfare of our precious equine partners.