



## **British Horseracing Authority Medication and Doping Control Research Summary: 'Devil's Claw' – updated April 2012**

### Why the research was needed

Devil's Claw, the common name for *Harpagophytum* plant species, is widely used in many animals for its anti-inflammatory properties. There are several products specifically marketed for horses, available without prescription at feed merchants, tack shops etc. Evidence for its purported anti-inflammatory activity is conflicting<sup>1</sup>. Further, despite being viewed as 'natural' substance, Devil's Claw is a prohibited [substance](#). Whilst it is neither likely to be used for 'doping' nor something for which we wish to produce a 'Detection Time', the primary reason for this study was that we wished to translate the laboratory method we use to detect it into routine screening to ensure that it is not given close to racing, the latter potentially compromising racehorse welfare. Our concern that it may be being used inappropriately has been substantiated by a survey study of post race samples. Having developed the method in 2008 with help from our colleagues at the French racing laboratory, we needed to perform a horse administration study to produce time/concentration data in order to be able to issue advice as needed to trainers.

### Overview of the study

The study was conducted at the Authority's Centre for Racehorse Studies with analysis at HFL Sport Science as a pilot in 2 horses. Research procedures complied with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and subject to ethical review; analyses were conducted to industry standard quality procedures. The product was given once at the manufacturer's recommended dose in two horses' feed, an intravenous catheter placed for the first two days of blood sampling, then removed and blood and urine samples taken for three more days.

### Outcomes and Conclusions

Chemical constituents of Devil's Claw were detected in both urine and plasma samples. These are prohibited substances, and trainers are hence advised against the use of any products containing Devil's Claw within 24 hours of a race. The effects of multiple doses of Devil's Claw have not been investigated and caution should therefore also be taken in the use of Devil's Claw in the days leading up to a race. Current efforts are being directed at achieving European harmonisation on the approach to this substance with the topic on the Agenda for the July 2012 meeting of the [EHSLC](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Harpagophiti radix (2nd edn). Thieme: New York, ESCOP Monographs, 2003; 233. ISBN: 1-901964-07-8.



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