

## Florida Compounder Reports Error In Medication for Dead Polo Horses

By Marissa Heflin, *Veterinary Practice News*

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Franck's Pharmacy in Ocala, Fla., reported Thursday that it incorrectly prepared medication used to treat the 21 horses that died Sunday shortly before the U.S. Open Polo Championship in Palm Beach County, Fla.

"As soon as we learned of the tragic incident, we conducted an internal investigation that was led by an outside lawyer and, upon its conclusion, we immediately alerted the state Department of Health and Board of Pharmacy," Jennifer Beckett, chief operations officer of Franck's Pharmacy, said in a statement released to the media.

"The report, which we are furnishing to these agencies, concluded that the strength of an ingredient in the medication was incorrect."

The statement did not specify the ingredient.

"We extend our most sincere condolences to the horses' owners, the Lechuza Polo team and the members of the United States Polo Association," Beckett said.

In Caracas, Venezuela, meanwhile, Lechuza Polo issued a statement saying that the Merial Ltd. injectable Biodyl, reported by some newspapers as being the vitamin supplement used, "is not the issue in this instance."

"A Florida-licensed veterinarian wrote a prescription for a compounded substitute vitamin supplement containing vitamin B, potassium, magnesium and selenium," the statement reports. "This compound was prepared in the state of Florida by a compounding pharmacy. Only the horses treated with the compound became sick and died within three hours of treatment."

The team noted that Biodyl is manufactured in France and is used worldwide in horses competing in strenuous competitions such as polo to help them recover from exertion more quickly. It has not been approved for use in the U.S.

Juan Martin Nero, captain of the Lechuza Polo team, told the Argentine newspaper La Nacion on April 22 that the team's horses had been given a vitamin supplement commonly given to horses before polo matches.

He identified the product as Biodyl, which is made in France by Merial Ltd., of Duluth, Ga. Merial released a statement Thursday noting that media reports of its product's involvement have not been confirmed.

"We have no confirmation that this is the case, and we are awaiting the results of the veterinary examinations, with which we intend to cooperate fully if asked," said Natasha Joseph, Merial's director of communications for the U.S. region. "The product is not FDA approved for use in the United States," Joseph noted. "We are confident that Biodyl is safe when used as directed."

Peter Rizzo, executive director of the United States Polo Assn., issued a statement expressing the association's condolences.

"There are no words to describe the sadness shared by everyone—particularly the devastated owners of those magnificent horses," Rizzo said.

The championship games resumed April 23 without the Lechuza Polo team, which withdrew from the games on Monday due to the circumstances.

A memorial service for the deceased horses was to be held Thursday after the final match of the day.