



A greyhound trainer based at the Palm Beach Kennel Club had his licensed revoked this month after state investigators found 24 instances where dogs under his care tested positive for drugs before races in 2016.

## NEW: Greyhounds' positive drug tests costs trainer license

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By **Hannah Winston**, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer



A greyhound trainer based at the Palm Beach Kennel Club had his license revoked this month after state investigators found 24 instances where dogs under his care tested positive for drugs before races in 2016.

Yoanly Savon's license was revoked March 8 by the Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering within the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. The division oversees horse, dog racing and jai alai as well poker games across the state. Several dogs tested positive for prohibited drugs two-dozen times in the span of less than a month, according to the 137-page report released by the division this month.

Savon told investigators he did not dispute the allegations but requested a hearing in the cases, which ended with him losing his license.

"Aggravating factors in this case dictate imposing the maximum license revocation penalty," the report states.

Carey Theil, executive director of GREY2K USA Worldwide, a greyhound advocacy organization based in the United States, said the revocation is a rarity in the racing world.

“We’re very grateful the division is dealing with the case in such a strong manner. That’s what we need to see,” he said.

According to nationwide data going back to 1990 and analyzed by the organization, only one other person has had their license revoked in Florida after drug allegations. Nelson Ulrich had his license revoked after two dogs tested positive in Daytona Beach for cocaine in 2007, according to the data and state licensing records.

Theil said samples of greyhound urine are taken before races and tested, and that results are sent to the state to monitor. He said the dogs can be owned by several people, but the trainer would be the one ultimately responsible for their well-being.

The report states there were 24 instances where several dogs under Savon’s care tested positive for drugs including caffeine, theobromine and theophylline. A veterinarian interviewed for the case told investigators that theobromine, a diuretic and muscle relaxant, is involved in chocolate poisoning in dogs and should never be given to canines.

Additionally, she told investigators that theophylline was previously used to help with respiratory problems in dogs, although it is no longer prescribed.

The vet noted that the levels of caffeine and theobromine found in the dogs’ systems “could have been dangerous to their health.”

Theil said usually in drug-related cases, his group has seen a long lag time between a sample being tested and any kind of administrative discipline. Normally, trainers pay a fee in drug cases. But he said he seen the division “really tighten up their enforcement in cases like his” and hopes the trend continues.

“I’ve seen a number of cases where I think it was warranted before and it didn’t happen,” Theil said of the revocation. “So to see it in this case is great.”