WELFARE OF RACING GREYHOUNDS

IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE & REHOMING

Karen Cunnington BSc BVSc Hons

www.greyhoundrehomingcentre.org

Advocating welfare improvement for all greyhounds through education & cultural change
Statistics: The Facts

• 3,300 litters per year are registered with Greyhounds Australasia*

• 3,300 x 6.5 (average numbers of puppies in a litter)=21, 450

• 13,300 greyhounds named (registered for racing)

• 21,450 – 13,300 = **8150** puppies/young that are not suitable for racing (failure to chase, injuries, lack ability)

• **38 % initial failure rate**

• Very little if any regulation of the dogs that are unnamed

*figures obtained from Greyhounds Australasia
STRESS AFFECTS PERFORMANCE & COMPROMISES WELFARE

• Proactive collaborative approach with researchers to
  – Reduce the number of dogs bred
  – Reduce rejection rates (wastage)
  – Reduce rehoming pressure

VS

• Reactive
  – GAP

• Financially viable?
UK FUNDED RSPCA RESEARCH

• 4 year project
• Multiple areas of concern identified at all life stages, similar to Australia

• Identified areas of priority are:
  – Effects of transport
    • Short and long distance
  – Periodontal disease
  – To reduce “wastage”
    • Using a statistical modelling technique to assess all factors that have an impact on performance
GOOD WELFARE

One without the other = stress
BREEDING

- Surgical procedures
  - AI
- In-breeding
- Injury prone lines
- Anxiety is heritable
PUPPIES (to 12 weeks)

- Minimal handling
- Lack of socialisation and exposure to novel stimuli

http://www.greyhound-data.com, Greyhound Rearing Complex, Churchable, QLD
REARING (3 – 15 months)

- Largely outdoors in paddocks
- Minimal human contact, Nutritional concerns
- Lack of appropriate socialisation & exposure to novel stimuli (habituation)
  - Excessive prey drive
  - Generalised fearfulness
*picture from No Agent Reality, “Premium Greyhound Rearing Property for sale”
Extremely stressful time
- Not habituated to kennels
- Transport
- Nutrition
- Injuries
- Lose contact with other dogs
- Shut in their sleeping quarters

Lack of environmental enrichment
Approach and knowledge is lacking

Fear = Compromised welfare = wastage
Need this for racing

But want this for retirement

And there is no time, facilities, budget or expertise for this remarkable transformation to take place!
ADOPTION COSTS

• $3000 - $6000 per dog
• Cost to re-home 50% of dogs under current adoption model
  – $60 million!
HOW DOES REARING, TRAINING & RACING IMPACT ON REHOMING SUCCESS?

Case studies:

• Joe: High prey drive Joe.wmv
• Betty Blue: Generalised fear Betty blue.wmv
NSW Government
Companion Animals Act 1998
Pt 5 Division 1 Sn 33A

What is a declared dangerous dog?

• has, without provocation, repeatedly threatened to attack or repeatedly chased a person or animal (not including vermin)
It is an offence under the Companion Animals Act 1998 to:

• Sell or advertising for sale, a proposed dangerous or menacing dog
  – 150 penalty units/$16,500

• Accept ownership of a proposed dangerous or menacing dog
  – 150 penalty units/$16,500
Joe

What would you do?
Summary

• Additional funding for rehoming is pointless unless it is combined with significant changes to:

  – Breeding
  – Rearing
  – Kennelling
  – Training
  – Education &
  – Enforcement
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Independent audit of rearing establishments
  – Numbers of dogs
  – Environment
  – Socialisation
  – Success rates