

Submission  
No 1022

## INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

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Partially Confidential

## The sport of Greyhound Racing – An Insider's Perspective

I believe there was a call for people to express their opinions regarding the greyhound racing industry. I have only just found out about it and I am hoping it's not too late to contribute.

I was born in 1960 and I am now 53 years old. During the 60's and 70's my father was a racer of greyhounds as well as a greyhound breeder and trainer. My brother continued on into the 80's, but not on the same scale. Maybe it was too long ago to be of any use but I'm writing this because I believe not much has changed in the treatment of these animals since, and my father is now long deceased, as is my brother.

At any given time there were between 100 and 150 dogs on our property including litters of pups, other people's dogs, and of course his own. That is just a rough estimate, the turnover was quite quick as dogs came and went and pups were sold.

I am an advocate against cruelty to animals and I belong to many charitable organisations. I believe this has some of its origins in what I witnessed growing up around the racing industry. I saw first hand how expendable these dogs were and what cruel fates were met by all of them except very few.

My very first experience with the cruelty was when I was about eight years old. My father and brother took me for a drive in the car to see a property that had been abandoned. From what I can remember it was in or near Mulbring NSW. We were looking around the sheds and kennels when we heard whimpering. I ventured into a small shed to find a white greyhound with patches of grey, tied to a hook on the wall. The cord was very tight around it's neck and it was unable to sit down or move much. It was very thin and had no food or water but what struck me as odd was that it's ears had been hacked off and the dried blood was all crusted around it's neck. Its whimpers soon became screaming howls as it writhed around as best it could. So happy to see someone, it was almost ecstatic. As I moved

toward the dog, my father grabbed me, pulled me out and shut the door to the miserable hot, dusty shed and made me go to the car. We left that poor dog there that day and the sound of it's howls as I watched the property disappear from the back of the station wagon, is something that, try as I might, I have never been able to forget. As I grew older, I came to realise that disposing of a dog that didn't win it's races, and cutting off it's ears so it couldn't be identified were par for the course.

In the years that followed, I was witness to many things that I would much rather forget. In fact, writing this has been extremely traumatic for me as it brings back all of those memories and the feelings of helplessness as I reluctantly watched on.

From the moment the puppies were old enough to run they were encouraged to chase, or at least show an interest. Those that didn't have any "potential" were either drowned or knocked on the head. They of course weren't run hard until they were a certain age because heaven forbid a potential "champion" should never see a starting box due to an error of judgement.

It was a big job to care for so many dogs so I was put to work from an early age; cutting up meat after school, walking dogs, feeding dogs etc.

We had walking machines for some but they couldn't all be on them as there wasn't enough so walk them we would. I had to walk six or seven dogs at a time even though it was illegal. Many experiences were to be had, both funny and horrendous. It had to be done.

I really don't know where to start so I'm just going to list some of the things in order to dispense with the torment.

Not only are most of these dogs treated as disposable, I don't think the public understand the "collateral" casualties. "Greyhound people" believe that in order to want to chase, they first need to want to kill whatever they are chasing. And kill they do. We used to have "the rabbit man" who came once a week

with sugar bags full of live (I believe wild) rabbits, which used to be placed in convenient cages for later use. He also brought live possums and many times I was tossed a tiny sugar glider from the bag, which ultimately would die much to my distress. Then we had a man who used to bring "other animals" I believe most of these were cats that had their claws ripped out so that any of these potential champions wouldn't be hurt. I had heard that the men that visited my father had "friends" in the RSPCA and the local council pound.

The dogs were treated really well for a while. They were fed the best food and given the best drugs to make them run faster or slower if needed. I remember a big rubbery capsule filled with dark red fluid that was slipped down a throat or two before a race that they referred to as a "bomb" There was never any problem administering this as one of the officials would give it if my father couldn't make it to the kennel. Sometimes they would let me do it as I had small fingers and the dogs trusted me and I was good at it.

They had a special word for giving a dog that was a favourite to win a race, a drug to slow it down so it came last or way down the field but I can't remember the word now. There were certain vets that would supply injections and capsules for a price. The drugs were also picked up from dealers at the tracks.

There was a lot of business done behind closed doors that I was not privy to as well. We had the odd "SP Bookie" meet my father at the local pub or at home, to discuss if a dog was expected to win etc, but I was always shuffled out of range of hearing. I could never say for sure what it was all about so I won't bother.

We would go to a race with five dogs and come back with two. I would never see them again or even be told what happened to them. If a dog didn't win a big race, it could be shot on the way home and flung into the bush. It could make it home and then be shot in the dark paddock instead of going back to its kennel.

My father would every now and then freight a whole lot of dogs off to "Singapore" to race because they were slower there.

That's what I was told as an explanation but my brother told me that they sent some of them to North Korea. I believe now they just drain excess dogs of their blood to be used in transfusions. It's new but I don't think it's the only way. I suppose it's better than beating them, hanging them or cutting their ears off and burying them alive, selling them to dog fighting rings as bait dogs, shooting them or just abandoning them and leaving them to die a miserable and cruel death tied closely in a hot shed with no food or water.

In the 70's you could sell your dog as bait and place a bet on the fight at the same time. I imagine you still can?

I recall listening to all the men my father knew at race meetings and anywhere they gathered, discussing what could be done with a dog if you didn't want to pay a vet to put it down. The turnover of dogs on our property was astronomical. No sooner would I get used to walking "Bobby" he would be gone and in his kennel would be maybe another "Bobby" but he was black instead of white?

Of all the hundreds of dogs my father owned or trained for someone else over the years, I would say only one in a hundred lived past two years old, and that is a hopeful estimate. Puppies were born and disposed of and records doctored.

I could go on and on about individual instances of extreme cruelty but I don't see the point. Something needs to be done about this industry and has done for a very long time. I hope this is it. I believe horses have it just as bad, if not worse.

I believe that every organisation and place on this earth that houses the vulnerable; children, animals and women, their tormentors will gather in greater numbers than you and I could ever imagine.