

## **INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Animal Liberation

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Herein Animal Liberation submits several concerns about the greyhound racing industry based on experience as well as research and printed facts that support these concerns.

#### Drug Use/Doping

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (**DAFF**) stated in their report, "Improving the welfare of the racing greyhound - A GRV perspective" ([http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/aaws/aaws\\_international\\_animal\\_welfare\\_conference/improving\\_the\\_welfare\\_of\\_the\\_racing\\_greyhound\\_-\\_a\\_grv\\_perspective](http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/aaws/aaws_international_animal_welfare_conference/improving_the_welfare_of_the_racing_greyhound_-_a_grv_perspective)), that the use of illicit substances is a recognised problem in the dog racing industry. On August 12, 2012 The Sydney Morning Herald published a story by Natalie O'Brien titled, "Going to the dogs - bikies, dopers and fraudsters". This story is available here: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/going-to-the-dogs--bikies-dopers-and-fraudsters-20120811-2418m.html#ixzz2f0xtjc79>). The article discusses the \$50 million/year NSW greyhound racing industry along with allegations of "race-fixing, drug use, money laundering and bkie group infiltration." The article suggests, "Organised crime figures are selling hard-to-detect steroids to greyhound trainers; Bkie groups are involved in breeding and selling greyhounds and laundering money through the tracks; Drug swabs are going missing or taking months to be released with no way of tracking them; and Races are being fixed by planting dogs that will run badly - often only for one race, never to be seen on the track again; With new rules allowing betting on dogs and horses to lose, this adds an incentive to fix races.

Some greyhound owners, including \_\_\_\_\_ from Bemboka near Bega, are so disillusioned that they refuse to race their dogs in NSW and take them interstate."

Also, "The celebrity TV vet Dr Rob Zammit, who has been an official on-course vet for Greyhound Racing NSW, said the problems in the industry were "endemic".

"I think the industry has had issues like this for a long time," he said. "It has not been honest, there are no two ways about it. I once tried to right the wrongs, advising that there are drugs being used in

dogs that are not showing up that we should test for, and I lost my greyhound clientele overnight because of it."

This article supports the story told to an Animal Liberation employee by a man walking two greyhounds four years ago. Emma Hurst, Campaigns Manager states, "I met the man in Gosford as he was walking his dogs and asked if they were rescued. He explained to me that he used to race them but that his dogs had been drugged by other racers and that the last time he took his dogs one became very ill vomiting up blood and that a vet had confirmed the dog had been fed a substance to make her ill. He explained to me that such occurrences were common and that he refused to race the dogs anymore because he feared the dogs may die the next time he risked racing them."

#### Unaccounted Numbers

There also seems to be a number of animals unaccounted for by the industry and difficulty knowing where animals 'retire'. Questions by Ms Faehrmann to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts available here: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/lc/qalc.nsf/6b9957d2cbad5bd8ca25700b00232203/58a60367046f09b3ca257abc0029aa66?OpenDocument> show that roughly 75% (although the workings for this figure are not explained) of greyhounds are 'named' and any dogs not registered for racing are potentially unaccounted. This means a significant number of puppies are likely killed or euthanized before 6 months of age, especially where they come from unregistered mating. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (**DAFF**) further state in their report, "At present there is a period of time whereby the actual person responsible for the care of the greyhound is unknown". The document explains that it is during this period that many dogs become 'lost'.

Animal Liberation and its employees have heard accounts from people who live nearby greyhound racers who have found pups within rivers and streams with a rope and brick tied around their neck

to drown the dogs. This is believed to be the fastest and cheapest way to dispose of a dog and no one can be held accountable as these dogs are not registered.

Currently it is common for registered dogs to be tattooed on the ears, yet there have been numerous reports of 'burial grounds' for greyhounds where their ears have been simply hacked off to remove the tattoo. The worst of these cases was in Tasmania in 2004. The Sydney Morning Herald describes when, "a whimpering, dying greyhound was found buried alive in wasteland outside Hobart late last month, it ignited a storm of outrage. The dog had been left to die under a sheet of tin in a bush dumping ground. One of its ears had been brutally hacked off to hinder identification and the remains of other greyhounds were found nearby."

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/10/24/1098556290613.html>

Numbers of euthanized dogs reported each year often do not contain the number of greyhounds within these statistics. As can be seen in Ms Faehrmann's questions at 2)4. The number of dogs not registered for racing may be unknown. Also, as can be seen in these questions/answers greyhound racing NSW also has no statistics on the number of greyhounds adopted after racing, and no statistics on the number of greyhounds euthanized by veterinarians (meaning there are therefore no numbers for those shot or drowned as a way of disposal). The fact that there are no statistics on veterinarian euthanasia is a concern as the industry has set a standard that participants are to use euthanasia by lethal injection as the only acceptable method (DAFF). However, obviously without any records there is no way to monitor that this is actually occurring. Overall the document by DAFF describes the statistics within this industry as, "confusing and difficult to interpret."

Wastage therefore seems to exist at puppy age where dogs may be considered to not have the ability to race, during racing where injuries may occur, and at retirement (which is still at a young age of 3 or 4). The DAFF document admits that 'wastage' is one of the biggest welfare problems the industry faces with many healthy dogs killed every year as a typical practice in the industry.

### Greyhound Adoption Program

It has been reported to Animal Liberation that the primary rehoming service (GAP) works closely with the racing industry and at times has been reported to encourage and support the racing industry. It has been reported to us that this group had openly admitted to attempting to cover up the number of 'missing dogs' and cruel practices of non-veterinary euthanasia. These accounts have come from those working within the industry to try and save a small number of dogs 'retiring' from racing. We believe that the number of dogs rehomed is very small after retirement (some have estimated around 500/year) and groups such as this have been used by the industry to imply that a much larger number of animals have been adopted out than truly have.

### Export and Animal Testing

Retired greyhounds, or those that don't perform at the track, are routinely shipped off to laboratories for animal testing. Because of their genetic purity, they are the research models of choice for heart and lung experiments. It is no longer legal in NSW for council pounds to supply dogs to labs so the greyhound is about the only dog in virtual endless supply. Their "owners" are the ones that surrender them over directly. While Greyhound Racing NSW state in Ms Faehrmann's questions that they do not *advocate* the use of greyhounds in research, they recognise, by failure to reply, that an unknown number of dogs are surrendered for this purpose.

There are also an unknown number of Australian bred greyhounds that are sent each year to race in China, and more recently Vietnam. These dogs would almost certainly be transported, housed and raced under terrible conditions. We have a deep concern over the export of greyhounds from Australia to Macau and to other overseas race tracks.

Macau is home to a single dog track called the Canidrome. Built in 1931, the Canidrome is a worn out facility that does not provide even the most basic welfare standards for dogs. When not racing they are confined for long periods of time in tiny cages stacked two high, when they do race many

sustain serious injuries and those who finish outside the top three in five races in a row, are simply destroyed. According to officials, around 400 dogs are killed by lethal injection each year and every greyhound arriving at the track is dead within three years. Unfortunately Australia continues to allow dogs to be exported to Macau knowing full well what their fate will be. Australia sent 309 greyhounds to Macau in 2011 and as there is no adoption program at the Canidrome, every dog sent there, dies there.

### Treatment of Race Dogs

Numerous complaints have come through to Animal Liberation including dogs being confined to small cages for at least 20 hours a day when not racing or training, dogs being trained illegally with the use of live baits (making it more difficult for dogs to be adopted after retirement as they can be ill suited to be around other animals including small dogs), dogs being raced on extremely hot days, and female dogs held as breeders being kept in intensive 'puppy farm' style conditions.

The DAFF document describes the outdated and , "flawed or unacceptable" training methods used within greyhound racing. By this, one can assume they are referring to punishment style training programs where animals can be trained via punishment methods rather than with the use of rewards. The amount and use of punishment is unregulated.

The DAFF report further explains that most pups are reared commercially and that the quality of care can affect the potential for pups. This goes as far as rehoming after racing where some dogs will not be in any way socialized and may also suffer mental and physical health concerns if the property or puppy farm style facility is of a bad standard of living and care. Further to this, many puppies at puppy farms die from malnutrition or inadequate care and neglect.

### Recommendations

In 2006 Greyhound Racing Victoria sat with the RSPCA and came to some resolutions to assist many of the problems detailed above. It seems that despite this effort, seven years later the same

conditions exist without improvement both in VIC as well as NSW. It seems that such actions in NSW may prove frivolous where they have clearly failed in VIC. For this reason and the reasons outlined above Animal Liberation recommends the following actions:

- All exports of greyhounds should be suspended as the continuing welfare of these animals cannot be controlled once exported.
- The sale or surrender of greyhounds to laboratories or universities for animal testing or research should be illegal in line with laws used to protect pound dogs from a similar fate.
- Considering the reports of drug use, animal cruelty, wastage, and the lack of change after previous attempts to 'clean up the industry' a serious consideration should be made to outlaw the professional racing and betting on greyhounds or any other breed of dogs.
- In 38 states in the US dog racing is illegal because of overbreeding, inhumane treatment and health risks. We believe these same concerns exist here in NSW. An example Bill can be found here: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2010/HB0630.html>
- Greyhound (dog) racing has also been made illegal in South Africa and we should look to South Africa and the majority of states in the US as an example toward progress in areas of animal welfare. Such a similar ban here will be the only way to control the humane treatment of this breed of dog and to ensure drug use and the issue of overbreeding/over killing is significantly reduced.