

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

I am making this submission as a greyhound trainer (hobbyist training my own dogs only). My concern is for the future of the sport and this wonderful breed of dog that has hunted (either live animal or artificial lure) every generation for the 10 thousand plus years it has existed as a breed. These dogs are highly intelligent and quite different in nature to other domestic dogs. While extremely loyal and affectionate they do have a wild streak in them, as if they were first generation domesticated pups from a wild species. I am saying this because it is something I have only come to fully understand after many years experience with greyhounds.

My submission is mainly an informed suggestion as to how the industry can be regulated to address the rehoming/euthanasia issues confronting the sport.

In 2011, 2818 litters were bred in Australia (Stud Book Figures), comprising 17,662 pups - around 6.2 pups per litter. The same year 12,882 greyhounds were given racing names (so around 75% of greyhounds bred, tho these 12,882 were bred previous to 2011).

Apart from mortality during rearing (greyhounds know no caution and are very accident prone), and pups getting injuries that prevent them from racing, the other thing that prevents greyhounds being a racing proposition is not chasing the lure with sufficient enthusiasm, or simply being too slow to be competitive.

It is the "too slow to be competitive" issue that I want to focus on. Being too slow is entirely relative. The more greyhounds that are bred, the greater the proportion that will be too slow simply because the same number of races are available regardless of how many greyhounds are bred.

The more dogs competing for a start in the same limited pool of races means the greater the proportion that will not be viable racing propositions. More prizemoney would make more greyhounds viable racing propositions, but numbers bred would also rise in response to an increase in prizemoney, so increasing prizemoney alone would not be a long-term solution.

The need for adoption places or for euthanasia of uncompetitive greyhounds could be dramatically reduced by placing a limit on the numbers of litters bred each year. I would estimate that limiting the number of litters to say 2000 (for a start) would in no way endanger the sport in terms of numbers available to race, while ensuring a higher proportion of those bred would be competitive. Breeding permits could be auctioned each year, or sold through a tendering process).

Owners would spend less on breeding, rearing and training costs while having the same prizemoney pool available as currently exists (this would make the sport more attractive to participants), and more adoption places would be available for ex racers as not so many of the places would be taken by greyhounds that didn't make the grade to start with.

The vast majority of greyhound owners and trainers would be better off in this situation other than the rearing farms who would lose some business, but their is currently a shortage of good rearing establishments anyway.

Reducing the number of litters would also level the playing field in favour of those owners/trainers who are much more likely to keep the dogs they've bred or reared. There are trainers who treat the sport as a numbers game, sifting through large numbers of young dogs (often offered to them by owners needing a trainer for their dog) and only keeping the best - and making a name for themselves on the basis of having better performed dogs than the trainers who just do their best with the dogs they have.

It is the people who treat training as a numbers game that contribute most to the wastage of perfectly healthy animals (and to giving the sport a bad name) - they only want a dog that will keep them in the limelight. I believe there should be a greater incentive for trainers to keep the dogs they have. Limiting numbers bred would help to achieve this.

There is one more issue I want to address. It is not true that the vast majority of greyhounds are suitable for adoption. I love my 3 retired greyhounds but none of them would be safe with an inexperienced person. I had one listed with an adoption agency since she was a pup - but after retirement she would have been too aggressive towards cats and small dogs to pass the test at the adoption agency - I suspect a majority of dogs sent to adoption agencies fail this test and are euthanased. Rather than risk my girl facing this fate I am keeping her myself to ensure she has a long and enjoyable life, and so no one else's pets come to harm. 'Greyhounds are hunters (it is part of what makes them such magnificent proud animals, but it is something the adoption agencies' publicity glosses over). I am happy to discuss these ideas further. (Please keep my identity confidential)