

# The state of greyhound racing in Great Britain

A mandate for change



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“Nearly five years after the introduction of the Welfare of Racing Greyhound Regulations 2010, greyhound racing is still a self-regulating gambling business that depends on the uncontrolled breeding and unaccountable disappearance of thousands of dogs every year; a situation that is unacceptable, indefensible and must change.”



*Annette Crosbie*

**Annette Crosbie**  
Annette Crosbie OBE, League Vice President

**Marc Abraham BVM&S, MRCVS**

“Most people simply don’t realise the intense suffering endured by racing greyhounds. Bred for speed, strength, and stamina the health and welfare of these animals is repeatedly compromised by this cruel industry. Racing dogs suffer with injured toes, torn muscles, and strained tendons, all resulting in painful arthritic joints.

These dogs are not beloved pet companion animals - they are commodities - sadly only ‘used’ to provide profit for their owners. Greyhounds can typically live for approximately 14 years, however the fate of a racing greyhound is often sealed at just three or four years of age when he or she will be disposed of after having served their purpose. The massive cruelty and exploitation surrounding this industry needs to be exposed and eradicated.”



*MARC THE VET*  
☺

**Emma Milne BVSc, MRCVS**

“I have long believed that animals should not be used for entertainment and would prefer to see greyhound racing stopped altogether. All the time it is permissible I fully support all efforts to improve the welfare of the dogs being produced, used and bred from in the name of the sport. It is time the industry was truly accountable for the thousands of animals in its care.”



*Emma Milne*

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	4
-----------------	---

<b>Executive Summary</b>	6
--------------------------	---

Greyhound suffering and broken promises	6
---	---

Our greyhound manifesto	7
-------------------------	---

## Report

<b>1 Introduction</b>	8
-----------------------	---

1.1 What is greyhound racing	8
------------------------------	---

1.2 Why is it of welfare concern?	8
-----------------------------------	---

<b>2 A dark past</b>	10
----------------------	----

2.1 Canine killing fields uncovered in Seaham, Co Durham	10
--	----

2.2 APGAW Report	11
------------------	----

2.3 Donoghue Report	12
---------------------	----

2.4 The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010	13
---	----

<b>3 A murky present</b>	14
--------------------------	----

3.1 Dog numbers in Britain	14
----------------------------	----

3.2 Dogs imported from Ireland	15
--------------------------------	----

3.3 The life of a racing greyhound	15
------------------------------------	----

3.3.1 Kennel conditions and inspections	16
---	----

3.3.2 Racing and injury risk	20
------------------------------	----

3.3.3 Injury type, severity and prevalence	22
--	----

3.3.4 Drugs	24
-------------	----

3.4 Unwanted greyhounds	26
-------------------------	----

3.4.1 Estimated numbers	26
-------------------------	----

3.4.2 Greyhound adoption	27
--------------------------	----

3.4.3 Euthanasia	28
------------------	----

3.4.4 Selling dogs for research and dissection	29
--	----

3.5 Failure of self-regulation	30
--------------------------------	----

<b>4 What Future?</b>	
-----------------------	--

4.1 Decline of the British greyhound racing industry	32
--	----

4.2 The way forward	33
---------------------	----

<b>References</b>	34
-------------------	----

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	38
-------------------------	----



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## Foreword

This report on greyhound racing in Great Britain is a joint product of the League Against Cruel Sports and GREY2K USA Worldwide. Both organisations believe that commercial greyhound racing is cruel and inhumane and, as currently practised, has no place in British society.

Across the globe, the humane problems of a largely unregulated dog racing industry have now been exposed, and governments are responding with affirmative action, including outright prohibitions.

In the United States the activity is now illegal in thirty-nine of fifty states. Countries such as South Africa and Jamaica have refused to legalise it in the first place. It is our hope that Parliament will study this activity in the context of its worldwide decline.

Although official critiques of greyhound racing in the UK have been issued in the past, it appears that little to nothing has actually changed within the industry. Greyhounds continue to suffer needlessly while concerns over their welfare remain largely ignored.

Our joint report also stands apart from past research as it contains more recent data and uses data not previously analysed, such as disciplinary rulings and the use of greyhounds by public universities.

This is also the first comprehensive report on greyhound racing in the United Kingdom from a humane perspective.

Research for this report was conducted over a twenty-month period, from October 2012 until May 2014. Information was collected through multiple avenues, including a review of existing reports on greyhound racing, public information requests submitted to government agencies and universities, industry websites and news stories.

Injury data is not publicly available from the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, so information was instead collected from the websites and blogs of UK greyhound trainers, as well as on industry forums, websites, and in an industry newspaper.

A total of 24 of these sites were located and searched, going back to 2006, to find references to racing greyhound injuries. Finally, stakeholders were contacted and asked if they could provide any useful data for the report.

Once data was collected and organised, key areas of welfare concern emerged.



**Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.**  
**President**  
**GREY2K USA Worldwide**



## **The League Against Cruel Sports exists to expose and end the cruelty inflicted on animals in the name of sport.**

This report aims to do that by revealing the level of cruelty and suffering still endured by greyhounds used for racing in Britain – eight years on from a damning exposé and industry promises of tighter regulation – and calling on Parliamentarians to fulfil their commitment to safeguarding greyhound welfare from ‘the cradle to the grave’.

This will not be easy reading for those who care about dogs and know what faithful companions they can be, for most racing greyhounds are viewed as commodities whose usefulness ends when they no longer bring in prize money, either through career-ending injuries or natural decline.

After that their life can go one of two ways: the lucky ones are adopted into loving homes and enjoy the creature comforts that every dog deserves. The rest – and no one knows how many dogs that currently is – are either killed, by a vet if they are fortunate, or shipped to Ireland where unwanted greyhounds are still sold for dissection.

This needless killing must stop.

I hope that you will find this report challenging and join our campaign to end the cruelty inflicted on greyhounds in the name of sport.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Blake-Lawson', written over a white background.

**Iain Blake-Lawson**  
**Chair**  
**League Against Cruel Sports**



# Executive Summary

## Greyhound suffering and broken promises

Almost a decade ago greyhound racing in Great Britain was reeling from public exposure of its callous cruelty to greyhounds. Investigations by newspapers and animal welfare organisations had shown the dreadful lives of greyhounds from birth to an often early death, their bodies being dumped in mass graves.

It was clear that cruelty, drug abuse, injury, neglect and killing were rife in greyhound racing.

The racing community promised the public and Parliament that they would heal themselves. They were believed. Parliament agreed “self-regulation within a statutory framework” was the best way to clean up the sport. To this end, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain was set up by the sport to impose some decency and discipline and Parliament gave a framework through a Statutory Instrument within which they had to operate.

In the intervening years have things improved for greyhounds? No. Shrouded in secrecy, greyhounds continue to come last in the race with trainers, owners, bookmakers and punters. This report shows that the life of a greyhound is still filled with abuse, neglect and early death.

Greyhound promoters have not kept their promise to care for their dogs. They have shown that they are not capable of healing themselves. This cannot continue.

**Parliament has an opportunity, through a review of the statutory framework for self-regulation, to strengthen protection for greyhounds and end the secrecy surrounding greyhound racing.**

It is not possible to have effective self-regulation without transparency and independent scrutiny.

We are calling for fundamental changes to industry practice, enforced through tighter legislation.

## Now is the time for action

We are certain that the majority of the public and Parliamentarians find it unacceptable that greyhounds continue to suffer cruelty and neglect just to provide some sport and gambling. If greyhound racing is to continue in this country it must seriously, and in a transparent way, end mistreatment of greyhounds.

We will work in partnership with people and organisations that have a zero tolerance towards cruelty, including those within the sport.

However, the last eight years have shown that greyhound racing by itself cannot stop the unacceptable suffering of greyhounds. It is time to strengthen the statutory framework and introduce independent scrutiny.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Duckworth'.

**Joe Duckworth,  
Chief Executive  
League Against Cruel Sports**

## Our greyhound manifesto

### ✓ **Five year review by Parliament in public**

The five year review of the Statutory Instrument should be open to the public with the power of Parliament to direct organisations to disclose information. A Select Committee review of the effectiveness of the current governance arrangements could call witnesses from greyhound racing and animal welfare organisations. It could judge the effectiveness of self-regulation by how outcomes have changed for greyhounds since 2010 and make recommendations to Government on strengthening the current arrangements.

### ✓ **Independent greyhound welfare regulation**

An independent welfare regulatory body that oversees all greyhound racing (both licenced and independent) and includes representatives from animal welfare organisations.

### ✓ **Welfare transparency**

Greyhound racing should be required by law to disclose information on greyhound welfare, at national and track level, to the public and an independent regulator on a quarterly basis. It should as a minimum include breeding, import/export of dogs, transport, kennelling, racing, injuries, retirement, rehoming and euthanasia. There should be full public disclosure of all regulatory and enforcement activity within the industry.

### ✓ **Drugs controls**

The use of testosterone to suppress oestrus, and anabolic steroids, should be prohibited.

### ✓ **Track curbs**

A moratorium on new tracks opening, or old tracks reopening, so the decline of the industry can be managed in such a way that greyhound welfare is not compromised.

### ✓ **Greyhound passports**

A system that allows the tracking of every dog from birth so that the enigma of the thousands of missing dogs can be ended.

### ✓ **Rehoming requirements**

A statutory requirement for tracks, trainers and owners to rehome all greyhounds bred for racing.

### ✓ **Breeding controls**

The introduction of a licensing regime for British breeders together with joint initiatives between Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the devolved nations of the United Kingdom and Irish government to tackle issues of over breeding and the trade in greyhounds.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 What is greyhound racing?

Commercial greyhound racing began in Britain in 1926 with the opening of the first dedicated greyhound stadium, Belle Vue, in Greater Manchester<sup>1</sup>. In commercial races greyhounds chase a mechanical lure – normally a stuffed toy or a windsock<sup>2</sup> – around a circular track in a variety of distance categories (e.g. 225m sprint, 1km marathon)<sup>3</sup>.

Two different types of commercial racing take place in Britain (see map p9)

### Regulated

Tracks are licensed by the industry's governing body, currently the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB), and races take place under the GBGB's Rules of Racing.

This is the predominant form in Britain with 24 tracks currently licensed by the GBGB<sup>4</sup>.

### Independent

'Flapping' tracks are not licensed by GBGB and therefore do not need to abide by the same licensing requirements and Rules of Racing.

There are currently nine independent tracks operating in Britain<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.2 Why is it of welfare concern?

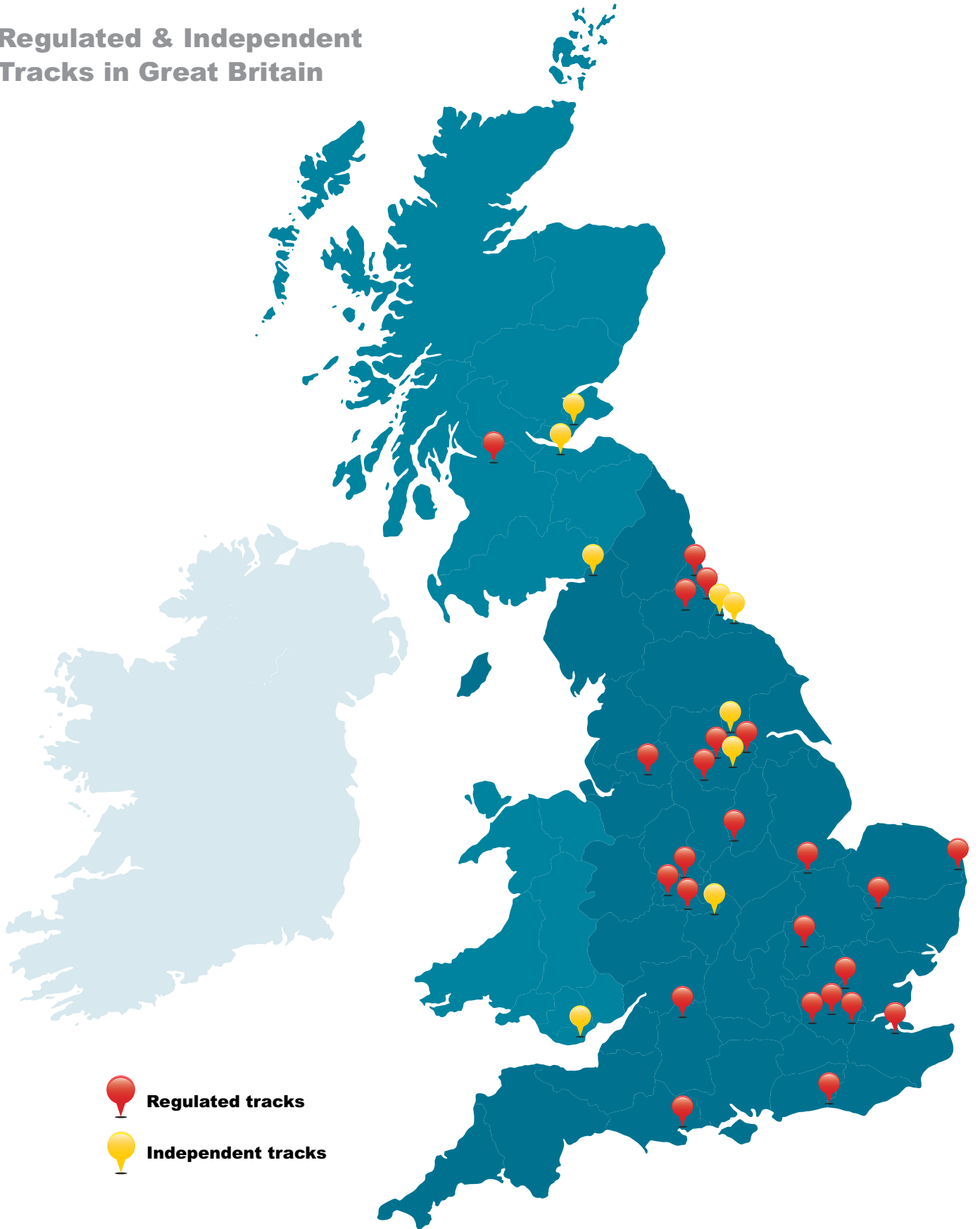
Greyhound racing, as currently practised, is cruel and inhumane. Countless dogs suffer terrible injuries and some die as a result of this antiquated activity. Despite media exposés of cruelty and killing, two damning reports on the industry and a new set of welfare regulations, it is still not possible to accurately assess the welfare of racing greyhounds in Britain due to the secretive nature of its self-regulation (see section 2).

The information that is available suggests that there is much suffering involved in British greyhound racing today (see section 3).





## Regulated & Independent Tracks in Great Britain



## 2 A dark past

### 2.1 Canine killing fields uncovered in Seaham, Co Durham

In July 2006, the Sunday Times exposed a dark and shocking secret that the greyhound racing industry had kept for many years: **more than 10,000 healthy but unwanted greyhounds had been shot with a bolt gun and buried in a back garden in Seaham, Co Durham, over a period of 15 years**<sup>6</sup>.

At the time of the exposé, which was sparked by an industry whistle-blower, this unofficial abattoir and graveyard was servicing licensed greyhound trainers and killing dogs that were used in televised races<sup>7</sup>. In other words, it was part and parcel of the commercial greyhound racing industry; helping to dispose of some of the 12,000 dogs that disappeared from the industry every year<sup>8</sup>.

According to the Chairman of the industry's governing body, then the British Greyhound Racing Board (BGRB), the prospect that there were similar operations that were yet to be uncovered was 'very plausible'<sup>9</sup>.

The Sunday Times' revelations sparked a national outcry along with demands for a government inquiry<sup>10</sup>. These calls were answered in August 2006 when the cross-party Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) launched an inquiry into the welfare issues surrounding racing greyhounds in England<sup>11</sup>. Shortly after the parliamentary inquiry began, the greyhound industry set up its own inquiry into regulation of the industry which was chaired by Lord Donoghue of Ashton<sup>12</sup>.

Both bodies published reports in 2007 calling on the industry to make changes to help safeguard dog welfare.



David Smith, the owner of the property where the mass greyhound grave was found, outside his home in Seaton with two dead greyhounds.

Photo: Paul Kingston (2006)

### 2.2 APGAW report

The APGAW report, published in May 2007, concluded that the events uncovered at Seaham represented 'a major failing for the regulation of the greyhound industry' and that 'it must be a matter of extreme priority for the industry to improve its tracking of dogs'. The report made numerous recommendations for improving greyhound welfare and encouraged these to be incorporated in forthcoming legislation (see box to right).

The League welcomed the report and its recommendations – which included measures to reduce the number of unwanted dogs, improve living and transport conditions for racing greyhounds and reduce injury rates – believing that full implementation would lead to significant improvements in greyhound welfare.



## Summary of recommendations made by the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare in its 2007 inquiry into the welfare issues surrounding racing greyhounds.

- There are enormous gaps in industry records of number of dogs. The single biggest measure [to improve welfare] is to find a system which matches the number of dogs allowed into the industry with the numbers that can be rehomed at the end of their racing career.
- In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that a vast number of dogs are destroyed every year. Euthanasia should be a last resort. All tracks, as a condition of their licence, should be required to run an associated dog rehoming scheme. Additionally, greyhound registration fees should be significantly increased to help fund the Retired Greyhound Trust and other rehoming charities.
- The regulatory body should be enabled to impose heavy sanctions on trainers and owners who do not register their greyhounds' retirement. Secondary legislation should make it illegal for a registered greyhound to be put down by anyone other than a vet.
- Measures need to be taken as a matter of urgency to reduce the demand for greyhound pups. To that end, all breeders and their premises should be registered, if not licensed, by the industry's regulatory body and be regularly inspected. As 75% of Britain's racing greyhounds are bred in Ireland, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) should initiate joint action with Irish authorities to tackle over-breeding and transport of greyhounds.
- The industry has an extremely poor record at recording, collating and reporting injury data. They should be required by law to record and publish all injuries on a central database and the regulatory body should publish an annual report with three year rolling averages for injury incidence at named tracks.
- The whole industry (including regulated and independent tracks) should be regulated by a broadened independent body that includes representatives from independent tracks, vets, the current regulatory body and a significant number of representatives from animal welfare organisations. The report specifically states that they '*do not believe that regulation by local authorities would be effective*'.
- Surface, design and dimension of tracks could have a significant impact on dog welfare and more research needs to be conducted in this area. In the meantime, tracks should be maintained to the best possible standard.
- As a condition of track and trainer licensing, all staff should have welfare training. Reputable welfare groups should have access to tracks and attend race days.
- All greyhounds should be able to stand up at full height and turn around whenever transported.
- All bookmakers should be required to contribute [financially] to greyhound welfare.



## 2.3 Donoghue Report

The industry commissioned report, led by Lord Donoghue, was published in November 2007. Although the report focused primarily on regulation of the greyhound industry and not on dog welfare, it did make recommendations on breeding, tracking and retirement of greyhounds, as well as publication of injury data, which were in-line with those made by the APGAW (see p11).

Lord Donoghue's report did fall short of the APGAW report in one key aspect – regulation. In direct contradiction to the APGAW, it stated that animal welfare organisations have no role to play in regulation of the industry and should not be represented in any new regulatory body. Instead, it recommended that the existing governing and regulatory bodies (British Greyhound Racing Board and National Greyhound Racing Club) be unified under the name Greyhound

Racing Board of Great Britain (GBGB) and that most of the existing staff be employed in the new structure. Rather than offering greater regulatory independence, this merger would make the body responsible for promoting greyhound racing, and the one tasked with regulating it, one and the same.

The report also recommended that tracks be regulated through a hybrid system, with the GBGB licensing regulated tracks and local authorities enforcing regulations at independent tracks – a system that the APGAW stated would be ineffective.



Lord Donoghue  
Photo: Parliament  
UK (2013)

### Key welfare recommendations in Lord Donoghue's 2007 review of greyhound racing in Great Britain.

- All breeders should be licensed by the regulator and subject to veterinary supervision. There should be rapid negotiation between British and Irish governments on breeding and transport issues.
- Significant improvements be made in tracking and tracing of dogs, including registering all dogs when they are earmarked (rather than when they start racing), maintaining records of all dog movements and a mandatory requirement for owners to de-register their dogs when they retire from racing and provide details of what has happened to them.
- All dog injuries should be recorded on a comprehensive central database and injury statistics should be published regularly. However, unlike the APGAW, this report stated publication could be done anonymously (without naming tracks).
- It should be a condition of track licences that they operate an efficient dog rehoming scheme and dog registration fees should be increased with a percentage returned to the owner on evidence that the dog's future has been secured (after racing career is over).
- The regulator should make increased provision for rehoming retired greyhounds, including increased financial support for retirement provision.
- Leading tracks must accept that they have a collective responsibility for improving the welfare agenda.

## 2.4 The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010

In March 2010 the government published The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010, statutory regulations brought in under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which became legally binding in England on 6th April 2010.

Despite the numerous points of agreement between the parliamentary and industry reviews in 2007, these statutory regulations are very limited in scope and fail to incorporate most of the recommendations of either review.

While a few good measures have been included, such as micro-chipping of all dogs, vet attendance at all races and collection of injury data (although no requirement for publication), the regulations do very little to improve dog welfare and instead leave the industry to regulate itself with few details of its operations made public. Explicitly, the regulations ignored the APGAW's calls for:

- an independent regulator with animal welfare representation, adopting instead the hybrid system proposed by Lord Donoughue which allows the industry to continue to self-regulate.
- the publication of injury data, instead requiring veterinarians at the tracks to record all injuries and the track to keep these data for 10 years. Tracks are not required to publish this information or even share it with the regulator.
- the implementation of systems to track greyhounds from birth until death and match the number of dogs allowed into the industry with the numbers that can be rehomed at the end of their racing career.
- requirements for tracks, trainers and owners to rehome unwanted dogs and provide evidence that they have done so.
- licensing of British breeders and joint initiatives between DEFRA and Irish authorities to tackle over-breeding and transport of greyhounds between the two countries.

The League came out strongly against the regulations when they were published, calling them 'little more than a crook's charter'.

They are due to be reviewed in 2015 and we will continue our call for an independent body to oversee regulation, and for the APGAW recommendations to be pursued.

The following sections set out why.



### 3 A murky present

The lack of transparency that still characterises greyhound racing in Britain means that, seven years on from the APGAW report, there is still little credible information available on:

- the number of dogs bred each year versus those registered to race
- the number of dogs imported from Ireland and the conditions of their transport
- the scale of dog injuries and the causes
- the length of most racing careers
- how many dogs find loving homes in their retirement
- how many are still killed needlessly.

This section sets out the limited information that is available to the public on the lives and deaths of racing greyhounds in Britain today.

**Table 1:** Number of greyhounds registered to race in Britain and the number of Irish-bred dogs in this racing pool: 2006-2013<sup>22</sup>.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Greyhounds registered in GB</b>	10,101	9,751	9,012	8,672	8,552	7,972	7,964	7,520
<b>Irish-bred dogs in GB racing pool</b>	7,640	7,369	6,943	6,652	6,536	6,223	6,264	6,203
<b>Percentage of dogs racing in GB who were bred in Ireland</b>	76	76	77	77	77	78	79	83

#### 3.1 Dog numbers in Britain

The number of racing greyhounds bred in Britain has been declining steadily since 2006 (Table 1). In 2013, just 251 greyhound litters were registered with the National Stud Book<sup>13</sup>, a decline of 58% since 2006<sup>14</sup>. The number of adult dogs registered to race on GBGB licensed tracks has not fallen as dramatically, dropping from 10,101 in 2006<sup>15</sup> to just 7,520 in 2013<sup>16</sup>, a decline of 24% (Table 1). Although no figures are available for the number of dogs currently racing on independent tracks, it is also likely to have declined from the APGAW's estimate of 4,000 in 2006 as the number of independent tracks has dropped from 17 to just nine today.

There is also likely to be an overlap of dogs racing on both independent and licensed tracks. Reports from 2007 suggested that between 20<sup>17</sup>-30<sup>18</sup>% of dogs were raced on both types of track. With an average litter producing six to seven puppies<sup>19</sup>, the maximum number of British-bred racing greyhounds in 2013 would have been approximately 1,632.

Assuming that every dog is a good 'chaser' and therefore registered to race, an unlikely scenario, there remains a minimum shortfall of 5,888 dogs between the number bred in Britain and the number registered to race here. This gap is filled by Irish-bred dogs (Table 1). GBGB records show that 83% of dogs registered to race in Britain in 2013 were bred in Ireland<sup>20</sup>, an increase of seven percentage points since 2006<sup>21</sup>.



## 3.2 Dogs imported from Ireland

Despite both the APGAW and Lord Donoghue recommending that DEFRA and the Irish authorities work together on the issue of greyhound breeding and transport, there is still sparse information available on this trade. GBGB records confirm that the majority of greyhounds registered in Britain originate in Ireland, yet, in response to a public information request made by GREY2K USA Worldwide in 2013, Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine stated:

**“There is no definitive database for the number of greyhounds transported by road and sea or for the average size of consignments.”**

This is a shocking lack of oversight by both governments, especially as racing dogs are explicitly listed as an area covered by the Welfare of Animals (Transport) England Order 2006 which sets out provisions regarding:

- Protection during transport
- Means of transport and transport practices
- Space allowances
- Duties of transporters
- Fitness to travel
- Feed, water and rest periods
- Competent and/or trained handlers
- Treatment of sick animals

It is difficult to comprehend how DEFRA can ensure that all Irish-bred greyhounds imported to Britain, some 6,000+ animals every year, are treated in accordance with these regulations when no government records are kept of their numbers or the methods used to move them.

## 3.3 The life of a racing greyhound

While many racing greyhounds were once privately owned and enjoyed a personal relationship with their owner, often living as part of the family, this is rarely the case today<sup>23</sup>. Many dogs raced on GBGB tracks are now owned by trainers or syndicates<sup>24</sup> and are confined in kennels with a large number of dogs<sup>25</sup>.

This transition is largely due to the rise of BAGS racing, where a consortium of bookmakers pay tracks to put on races which are broadcast directly into betting shops for the purpose of off-track betting<sup>26</sup> (see box on next page).



## BAGS Racing

A financially crucial part of the industry is the Bookmakers' Afternoon Greyhound Service (BAGS).

Founded in 1967 by a consortium of bookmakers to provide gambling opportunities 'on wet winter's afternoons' when horse racing was suspended<sup>27</sup>, BAGS racing is now broadcast daily from several of the 17 tracks that have BAGS contracts, resulting in more than 25,000 BAGS races every year<sup>28</sup>.

According to Lord Donoughue, meeting this high demand for 'betting product' necessarily requires very large numbers of greyhounds, with BAGS racing viewed by some as the main driver of greyhound overproduction.

Some trainers may also try to fulfil their large BAGS contract by running their dogs more often, and this inevitably leads to other welfare problems such as increased injury rates<sup>29</sup>.

Whilst BAGS races are generally poorly attended (at the track), they generate almost all of the off-track betting income for regulated greyhound racing<sup>30</sup>.

To paraphrase Lord Donoughue, 'as the principle economic driver of greyhound racing is off-track betting, and the principle vehicle for off-track betting is BAGS racing.... it becomes clear that, **were it not for BAGS, there would no longer be a sustainable licensed greyhound racing industry in Great Britain**<sup>31</sup>.'

### 3.3.1 Kennel conditions and inspections

Most greyhounds are kept confined at off-track kennels owned by their trainer and brought to the track on the day of the race. Trainers racing on GBGB tracks must keep their kennels in accordance with GBGB rules outlining the size of each unit as well as details of the cleaning regime and food and water provisions (Table 2)<sup>32</sup>.

Since January 2011, the GBGB has required all kennels to have an annual veterinary inspection where various aspects of the accommodations are rated as either acceptable or unacceptable and steps for improvement given<sup>33</sup>.

Kennels are also inspected twice every year by GBGB Stewards to ensure they are adhering to the Rules of Racing<sup>34</sup>.



Typical single greyhound unit.

Photo: Dillymore Kennels, Suffolk (dillymorekennels.co.uk).

**Table 2:** GBGB Rules of Racing - Rule 212: Minimum Requirements for all Residential Licensed Kennels and Transportation of Greyhounds

	<b>Double unit (housing two dogs together)</b>	<b>Single unit</b>
<b>Kennel width</b>	1.5 metres/5 feet	1 metre/3.3 feet
<b>Kennel depth</b>	2.3 metres/7.5 feet	2.3 metres/7.5 feet
<b>Removable wooden bench to provide bedding area</b>	1 metre <sup>2</sup> /3.3 feet <sup>2</sup>	1 metre <sup>2</sup> /3.3 feet <sup>2</sup>
<b>Distance between bench and front of kennel</b>	1.25 metres/4 feet	1.25 metres/4 feet
<b>Each kennel shall be provided with adequate natural or artificial light and regulated ventilation.</b>		
<b>All excreta and soiled material shall be removed at least twice daily and more often if necessary from all living compartments and at least once daily from exercise areas.</b>		
<b>All greyhounds accommodated on the premises shall be provided with suitable bedding material and be given adequate exercise</b>		
<b>All greyhounds shall be adequately supplied with suitable food and water and visited at suitable intervals.</b>		

Most racing greyhounds spend 95% of their time confined in a kennel<sup>35</sup>, so while these regulations and inspections are welcome, they are not sufficient to ensure that greyhounds' welfare needs are met. The regulations regarding 'adequate' exercise, food and light are meaninglessly vague and subjective. For example, most greyhounds are let out of their kennels for exercise and daylight only three to four times a day for periods of just 15 to 20 minutes.

Additionally, a study into greyhound welfare conducted by the University of Bristol in 2012 found that more than 95% of greyhounds who are kept in paired housing (two dogs together) are constantly muzzled and that this practice is highly distressing for them<sup>36</sup>, yet this issue is not mentioned in the regulations.

The Society of Greyhound Veterinarians – a branch of the British Veterinary Association specialising in greyhounds – has expressed its concern with kennel inspection policies, particularly the GBGB's lack of 'desire to introduce minimum standards for the selection and training of inspecting vets' and that the inspection form does not include any mention of the Animal Welfare

Act 2006<sup>37</sup>. The fact that veterinary inspectors are paid by the trainer also leaves the system open to corruption.

Trainers who race at independent tracks do not have their kennels inspected. The Welfare of Greyhound Regulations 2010 simply requires local authorities to inspect independent tracks before granting or renewing a licence, there are no provisions for inspection of trainers' facilities<sup>38</sup>.

During the consultation on the Welfare of Greyhound Regulations 2010, 87% of responses (excluding those calling for an outright ban on the industry) called for all trainers' and breeders' kennels to be licensed and inspected by an **accountable independent body**<sup>39</sup>. The Government ignored these recommendations stating that:

*"We have not been convinced that there is sufficient evidence of welfare problems at trainers' kennels that merit further regulations above the already significant protection provided to greyhounds by the Animal Welfare Act 2006<sup>40</sup>."*



Welfare problems at licensed and independent trainers' kennels continue to be a major cause for concern.

Despite the GBGB awarding a total of £236,000 to trainers in 2012 for kennel improvements<sup>41</sup>, Amanda Ainsworth, Welfare and Operations Manager for the Retired Greyhound Trust, told the Greyhound Star in September 2013:

“... there has been a marked increase in the number of improvement notices served on racing kennels. In the last six weeks I must have been approached by 20 trainers asking us to take dogs because they have been ordered to reduce their number<sup>42</sup>.”

Adequate living conditions and proper medical care are all too often sacrificed to save costs, and numerous cases have revealed that even when the severity of the cruelty is exposed, either no or lenient punishment is handed down.

Here are just a few recent examples, cited below and on the following pages.

### **In 2010, independent greyhound trainer and owner Ian Street was given a lifetime ban on owning animals and a four month suspended prison sentence after pleading guilty to 11 offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.**

The prosecution was brought by Wirral Council with the support of Greyhound Rescue West of England (GRWE) following the removal of 29 greyhounds from Street's property in April 2009. According to GRWE, the dogs were kept in blood stained, rusty kennels; in near-total darkness with an open, clogged drainage channel containing stinking brown sludge. Many of the dogs were kept muzzled, and none had dry bedding; all of the dogs were stained with urine, with five completely saturated<sup>43</sup>.

The dogs themselves were described as being in “extremely poor physical condition and seemed unused to human contact.” Many had severely damaged and bleeding tails, several with old breaks; almost all showed signs of mites, fleas and worm infestations; and many had noticeable injuries including open sores and missing toes.

As trainers racing on independent tracks do not have their kennels inspected, this cruelty only came to light when members of the public complained to Wirral Council. The Council visited Street in June 2008 and issued a welfare improvement notice, which Street ignored. A further complaint was made in January 2009 and Street was visited again, but by now he was breeding puppies. The dogs were not rescued for a further three months<sup>44</sup>.



An open and infected sore on the thigh of a young dog removed from Street's property.

Photos: Greyhound Rescue West of England (2010)



Female greyhound confined to unsafe wire kennel in almost total darkness.

(Image taken with flash).

## **In December 2010, GBGB licensed trainer Christopher Cronin was fined £750 and ordered to pay £10,000 in costs for the neglect of puppies in his care.**

Specifically, the GBGB found that he “failed to provide the puppies with access to drinking water, failed to monitor their health and well-being and failed to act upon the illness that developed in the puppies by taking remedial measures or seeking prompt medical care.”

The kennel was also not appropriately heated and did not have appropriate bedding for the puppies.

An inspection of the dogs at the kennel by a veterinary surgeon revealed the extent of the puppies’ poor condition.

The general condition of the puppies was described as hypothermic, all were described as shivering, five out of the six were emaciated and the sixth was thin, all showed varying degrees of clinical dehydration, all the puppies were described as having fleas.

One of the dogs was in such bad shape that euthanasia was the only option. Post mortem tests did not find a disease or virus, but the vet did testify at the hearing that “failure of primary care was evident.”

The GBGB Disciplinary Committee ruled that “Mr Cronin caused or permitted greyhounds to be treated in such a manner as caused those greyhounds unnecessary suffering.”

Despite the severity of the case, the trainer was not suspended.

Mr Cronin failed to pay the fine and costs and his licence expired on December 31, 2010. In July 2011 the GBGB served him with a notice to pay the outstanding money but he launched a legal appeal. As of June 2013 he still had not paid<sup>45</sup>.

## **In 2012, the Sunday Express exposed the terrible conditions at two greyhound trainers’ kennels after an investigation carried out by the greyhound advocacy organisation Greyt Exploitations.**

Film and photographs taken inside the kennels of Beverly Heaton in Swinton, and Nigel Saunders in Stockport, revealed dirty, cold, damp kennels where dogs spent most of their time in the dark.

In an attempt to defend the conditions at her kennels, Mrs Heaton revealed how little exercise and fresh air racing greyhounds typically get. She told the Express: “We’re inspected by the GBGB once a fortnight and if there was a problem they’d soon tell us. The dogs are let out four times a day for 15 to 20 minutes<sup>46</sup>.”

**Although the Express article states that the GBGB was investigating both facilities, no action appears to have been taken against either trainer.**



Greyhounds puppies featured on Christopher Cronin’s listing on a greyhound trainer website.  
Photo: greyhoundtrainers.com



Active kennel blocks at Nigel Saunders’ property.  
Photos: Greyt Exploitations (2012)

## **A GBGB disciplinary hearing on 5th November 2013 further highlights the failure of self-regulation in preventing animal suffering<sup>47</sup>.**

The Disciplinary Committee heard how several inspections at the kennels of Anne McCarroll, a professional greyhound trainer attached to Newcastle Stadium, had found “unacceptable features and general poor condition of greyhounds”, including problems with teeth, fleas and underweight greyhounds.

Inspections also found that Mrs McCarroll had in excess of 52 greyhounds, the limit imposed by the Director of Regulations, and had deliberately manipulated the paperwork to disguise this fact. One inspection found the kennels unable to account for 19 greyhounds that had disappeared since the previous inspection just one month earlier.

The Committee also heard evidence from the Retired Greyhound Trust which had received an urgent appeal from Mrs McCarroll earlier in the year. She requested its help in urgently rehoming 20 greyhounds as she had ‘allowed herself’ to get into the situation of having more than 80 greyhounds.

The evidence left the Disciplinary Committee “very concerned about the welfare of some of the greyhounds” and “very concerned about the competence of Mrs McCarroll to run professional kennels”.

**Yet, despite these serious concerns, they did not withdraw Mrs McCarroll’s licence or confiscate the dogs.**

Instead, she was fined £500 and allowed to carry on operating, albeit with the threat that her licence would be withdrawn if she did not comply fully with specific conditions regarding number of dogs held at her kennels, staff support and accurate documentation.

In January 2014, just three months after Mrs Carroll’s original hearing, a second inquiry was held against her. She was found in breach of GBGB rules for failing to keep accurate records of the movement of greyhounds in her care between February 2011 and June 2013.

**She received no further punishment for this new breach of the rules.**

### **3.3.2 Racing and injury risk**

Greyhound racing takes place year round in Britain, with dogs owned by GBGB trainers typically racing one day in every five and participating in several races in a single race day (heats, semi-finals, final)<sup>48</sup>. Similar figures are not available for dogs raced on independent tracks.

Both the APGAW and Donoghue reports expressed concerns that the frequency with which a dog raced would impact on injury rates and career length. Both reports suggested limiting the number of races dogs take part in each week in order to prolong their racing career and thereby reduce the number of dogs retiring and needing homes every year.

According to the Society for Greyhound Vets, the dimensions of the track, the nature of the running surface and the weather also contribute to injury rates<sup>49</sup>. Greyhound’s Voice – a committee of greyhound trainers, owners, promoters, vets and charity representatives – told the APGAW that greyhounds are now generally larger and faster than when many tracks were built, putting them at great risk of injury on badly maintained track surfaces<sup>50</sup>.

Recent posts by greyhound trainers and owners on greyhound racing forums support this view:

“No wonder there are no entries for the opens. At least 3 dogs carried off tonight. The track has been getting worse over the last few weeks. I have heard the track is bone hard and needs digging up with more sand put on<sup>51</sup>.”

“Tracks are forever being dug up and packed down. New sand and drainage that dries out way too quickly during warmer weather. The above 2 things alone have IMO contributed to a seemingly record level of broken hocks and career ending injuries<sup>52</sup>.”

“Consistent track management really needs to be addressed as its a major concern to everyone involved with the sport and at every track<sup>53</sup>.”

Concerns over track safety led the APGAW to call for injury statistics to be published for **named tracks**. They were not alone. During the consultation on the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations, 23 organisations and 1,671 individuals called for injury rates to be published<sup>54</sup>.

“The Society is also concerned that currently, the injury data will not be published and made publicly available. The Society believes that this important [sic], as it would put pressure on tracks with high injury incidence to make prompt improvements. Furthermore, if the public is to regain faith in the greyhound industry, it must be seen to be measurable, open and accountable.”

RSPCA response to the DEFRA consultation<sup>55</sup>

Despite such overwhelming demand for the publication of injury statistics, the 2010 Regulations do not require it. Even Lord Donoughue’s call for the publication of anonymous injury data (without naming tracks) was ignored. The Regulations simply require tracks to record all injuries that occur during races, trials and sales trials (not during schooling trials) and keep these records for 10 years. Tracks are not required to share this information with the public or even licensing bodies.

Tracks licensed by GBGB do have an additional requirement to record out-of-racing injuries that occur on the track, and their record books must also be open to inspection by GBGB officials at any time<sup>56</sup>. However, a GBGB Welfare Officer told the New Zealand Greyhound Racing Association’s 2013 Independent Welfare Review:

‘... this rule is subject to adherence by the trainer and monitoring and enforcement is not feasible <sup>57</sup>.’

Even some in the industry are unhappy about the secrecy surrounding greyhound injuries. The Greyhound Trainers Association stated in May 2014 that trainers and owners have been asking for track safety and injury statistics from the GBGB for some time, yet no information has been published on the subject<sup>58</sup>. A snapshot from a popular greyhound racing forum, Greyhound Scene, reveals a deep lack of confidence in track injury reporting and the GBGB:

“Track safety is a joke. They don’t publish the figures because there would be a welfare outcry. Tracks refusing to put badly injured dogs to sleep to keep their injury rate down, in case they do ever have to provide them<sup>59</sup>.”

“All the time the GBGB don’t publish injury stats the worst tracks are kept anonymous so what incentive do these tracks have to try harder?<sup>60</sup>.”

“It needs saying and I am going to say it. The truth is that if accurate injury stats were published from all tracks. The sport would be shut down on the welfare issue<sup>61</sup>.”

Perhaps unsurprisingly in this fractured industry, track owners tell a different story. Easington Greyhound Stadium, an independent track, believes that owners and trainers wrongly blame poor track maintenance for injuries that are actually a routine part of racing – stress fractures from repeated fast running<sup>62</sup>. In a notice on their website, the track chastised owners and trainers for expecting the track to freely euthanise all injured dogs – including those with only minor injuries – and called on them to take responsibility for the welfare of their own dogs.





### 3.3.3 Injury type, severity and prevalence

Animal welfare organisations have long considered the level of injury suffered by racing greyhounds to be too high. These concerns are supported by the University of Bristol's 2012 study into greyhound welfare which identified racing injuries as a key cause of severe suffering for racing dogs<sup>63</sup>. In the absence of publicly available injury records, information must be gleaned from a variety of sources to try and ascertain the type, severity and frequency of injuries endured by racing greyhounds.

The National Greyhound Racing Club – the former regulating body that was replaced by the GBGB in 2009 – estimated that on average two dogs per race meeting require treatment on site for injuries ranging from minor skin trauma, to fracture requiring fixation, or injuries requiring euthanasia<sup>64</sup>.

The only published injury figures to date are contained in a 2014 academic paper<sup>65</sup>, but were based on data collected from 2002 to 2006. During this four year period, a total of 1,168 injuries were recorded at the two tracks studied (Rye House and Walthamstow, both now closed).

These figures only include injuries recorded by the duty veterinarian at the track, not those that became apparent after the dogs left the track, so may be underestimates. The type of injury was only recorded at Rye House and included: fractures (leg and foot bones, cervical and coccygeal vertebrae, scapulae and skulls); skin and footpad lacerations; tears in groin and leg muscles; bruises; cramp; sprain and unidentifiable causes of lameness.

As no published injury records are available for any period more recent than the above study (2002-2006), or for any other track, GREY2K USA Worldwide conducted an extensive search for injury reports on the websites, twitter feeds and blogs of UK greyhound trainers; as well as on industry forums, websites and in the industry newspaper *Greyhound Star*.

A total of 276 specific greyhound injuries were found dating from 2006 to June 2014. Analysis of these reports revealed:

- Bone fractures were overwhelmingly the most frequently reported injury (118 reports), followed by 22 muscle tears, 11 lacerations, six sprains and five strains. The type of injury was not identified in 100 cases (36%).
- Forty-four dogs reportedly died or were euthanised as a result of their injury, a total fatality rate of 16%. However, as the fate of the dog is not given in every report, this is likely to be an underestimate.
- Nine greyhounds were injured twice; around three quarters of the injured dogs were male; and the most common age of the dogs when injured was 2 years old.

A study conducted by the University of Liverpool revealed that one unnamed GBGB track euthanised approximately 29 greyhounds per year (87 dogs between June 2007 and August 2010), primarily due to injuries sustained during racing (80 of the 87 dogs killed)<sup>66</sup>. The average age of the dogs when euthanised was just three years.

**Without figures published by the industry, it is not possible to know the total number of dogs injured, often fatally, on British tracks every year. But this number would mask the individual suffering of each dog, many enduring excruciating fractures and premature deaths.**



Rotar Wing's fatal fall at Sunderland, July 2011.  
Photo: Greyt Exploitations (2011)

## Alien Planet



Photo by: Steve Nash (2013)

Breed: Blue Male Greyhound  
Born: 18 August 2010  
Died: 15 July 2013

Euthanised after suffering a broken leg during a race at Nottingham.

## Kokoro



Photo: Greyt Exploitations

Breed: Brindle Male Greyhound  
Born: 1 June 2010  
Died: 27 March 2013

Euthanised after breaking his neck during a race at Yarmouth Stadium.

## Westmead Adonis



Photo by: Yan Photography (2012)

Breed: Black Male Greyhound  
Born: 21 August 2012  
Died: 25 February 2013

Euthanised after suffering a shattered foreleg during a race at Sittingbourne.

## Rotar Wing



Photo: Greyhound-Data.com (2011)

Breed: Black Male Greyhound  
Born: 7 September 2007  
Died: 14 July 2011

Euthanised after collapsing with a broken back during a race at Sunderland.

## Droopys Quincy



Photo by: Greyhound Data.com (2013)

Breed: Black Male Greyhound  
Born: 9 September 2011  
Died: 24 January 2014

Euthanised after suffering an injury during a race at Romford.

## Freddy Thelegend



Photo: Greyhound-Data.com (2012)

Breed: Black Male Greyhound  
Born: 1 June 2011  
Died: 21 April 2014

Euthanised after suffering a broken leg during a race at Nottingham.

### 3.3.4 Drugs

The use of drugs in greyhound racing is an issue of integrity but also an animal welfare concern as substances used to slow down or speed up dogs can have serious side-effects and result in long-term damage. Yet, the Welfare of Racing Greyhound Regulations 2010 does not require mandatory drug testing for racing greyhounds. In fact, the issue of doping is not mentioned in the regulations.

Dogs raced on GBGB licensed tracks do receive some protection from unfettered drug use under Racing Rule 214 which states: *“it is the responsibility of the trainer to ensure that all food, vitamins, minerals and additives fed to greyhounds in his/her charge are free from any substance that may falsely affect their performance or prejudice their welfare. GBGB Sampling Stewards and Stipendiary Stewards may visit a licensed stadium for any race or trial meeting and select a number of greyhounds at random for drug sampling.”*

Sampling is normally via a urine specimen taken just before a greyhound's race or trial, but post-race sampling may also take place<sup>67</sup>. Dogs raced on independent tracks are not subject to these regulations.

According to the Racecourse Promoters Association, the organisation that represents licensed greyhound tracks:

*‘... setting up a drug testing regime for independent tracks would be too high a burden for them to survive<sup>68</sup>.’*

In 2009, the GBGB commissioned the Independent Anti-Doping and Medication Control Review. A panel of experts was established to evaluate the processes in place to monitor and control the use of banned and controlled substances. Despite claiming to be an independent review, all the panel members had some connection to the horse or dog racing industries<sup>69</sup>.

Nonetheless, their report, published in 2010, offered some interesting insights and recommendations:

- Only one in 60 dogs starting in a race or trial underwent drug testing.
- 208 positive samples were found from 2006-2009, out of 40,000 samples collected.
- Fines given as penalties for positive samples during this period were highly inconsistent, particularly in relation to cocaine, caffeine and dexamethasone (a steroid used as an anti-inflammatory).

- Treatment Books were not being completed properly by many trainers and were not being properly monitored by Stipendiary Stewards.
- There was a worrying amount of ignorance within the industry on aspects of the current anti-doping and medication policy and some uncertainty among some officials and regulators.
- The panel recommended a **considerable increase in the number of dogs tested** at trials and sales trials, stating: *‘we believe this is an important area where integrity and welfare may currently be compromised.’*
- It also expressed concern over the widespread practice of giving female greyhounds testosterone to suppress oestrus\*, stating: *‘it is not possible to justify the administration of androgenic (masculinising) agents to racing bitches and we recommend that testosterone should be prohibited.’*



\*A regularly occurring period of sexual receptivity in most female mammals, during which ovulation occurs and mating can take place.

As the GBGB does not publish the number of dogs tested per race, it is unclear whether the panel's recommendation for considerably more testing has been implemented. It is clear that the GBGB has ignored the recommendation to ban testosterone as an oestrus suppressant as the hormone is still named as a licensed product (under the brand name Durateston) for this purpose on the GBGB anti-doping website<sup>70</sup>.

Yet, in guidance provided on the same website for an alternative oestrus suppressant which is progesterone-based, the GBGB acknowledges that testosterone is:

**“considered inappropriate for this purpose on welfare, efficacy and integrity grounds.”**

Through reports of the GBGB Disciplinary Committee hearings, it is possible to uncover how many drug-related inquiries have taken place since the 2010 report. Between 2011 and February 2014, a total of 122 inquiries resulted from drug related cases, a full 70% of all inquiries held in that period<sup>71</sup>. However, it is not clear what proportion of drug tests, or even positive drug tests, this represents.

It is clear that the penalties handed down would not provide much of a deterrent to future offending:

- Eighty-three inquiries (68%) resulted in fines, but the majority (64%) were £500 or less while only 17 (20%) were £1000 or more.
- Only 14 inquiries (11%) resulted in suspensions or a permanent ban.
- Even repeat offenders are treated with leniency. In September 2013, trainer Toni Tungatt was disciplined for her fourth drug-related breach of the Rules. She received a £1000 fine but no suspension. This meagre penalty even upset members of the forum Greyhound Scene, who felt that she should have been banned<sup>72</sup>.

The reports also reveal that a wide range of drugs were used to both speed up and slow down racing dogs, including: morphine, amphetamines, many types of steroids, temazepam (a powerful sleeping pill), barbiturates, anti-inflammatories, caffeine and cocaine.

Although all of these drugs can have serious side-effects, two of these substances are of particular concern, theobromine and timolol.

## Theobromine

A chemical found in chocolate that is known to be fatally toxic for some dogs in very small quantities. It is used as a stimulant.

## Timolol

A beta-blocker which, according to the Disciplinary Committee, would “limit their intake of oxygen especially at the beginning and end of a race which could at the very least cause significant distress.” It is used to impair performance.

Even this limited insight into drug use at GBGB tracks is more than is known about independent tracks as there is no legal requirement for them to carry out drug tests. However, a case that recently hit the headlines shows that drug use does occur on independent tracks.



**In August 2011, the Daily Mail reported that independent trainer Anthony Gregory Fowler pleaded guilty to two counts of causing unnecessary suffering to a dog and two counts of administering drugs to a dog knowing it to be poisonous or injurious<sup>73</sup>.**

He had been giving greyhounds **cannabis to slow them down** so they would lose, and then when the odds improved he would bet on the same dogs but give them **Viagra or testosterone to speed them up**. He was given an 18 week custodial sentence that was suspended for 18 months – **so he avoided prison** – and was ordered to pay £1000. He also received a lifetime ban on keeping animals.

This case only came to light when police investigated Fowler on suspicion of selling cannabis, meaning many more dogs could suffer similar abuse on independent tracks yet go undetected due to inadequate regulation.



Anthony Fowler outside court.

Photo: Darlington and Stockton Times (2011)

## 3.4 Unwanted Greyhounds

### 3.4.1 Estimated numbers

In 2007, the APGAW reported that a minimum **surplus of 13,478 greyhounds** was produced by the regulated greyhound industry in England and Wales every year. This figure was based on industry estimates of 11,000 dogs retiring from regulated racing each year plus approximately 2,478 young dogs each year who never make it to the track because they are too slow or 'non-chasers'.

The report goes on to estimate that approximately 5,000 of these 'unwanted' dogs are re-homed, 3,000 may be retained as pets and 750 may return to Ireland, a total of 8,750 dogs. It concluded:

**"Under these figures a minimum of 4,728 dogs are unaccounted for each year and we can assume that the majority of these dogs are destroyed. However, this figure does not account for dogs from independent racing or those which are bred for the British racing industry in Ireland. These figures must therefore be regarded as conjectural and are likely to be a significant underestimation of the true scale of the problem of unwanted dogs being destroyed."**

Lord Donoughue's report corroborated these findings, stating:

**"Taken together, the BGRB [now the GBGB] initiatives and the welfare charities rehome about half of the dogs which retire from racing. Some others are personally rehomed by their owners and trainers. We do not know what happens to the rest."**

He went on to stress that the public expected the industry, including the independent sector, to establish a system where the whereabouts and status of all greyhounds, preferably 'from cradle to grave', or certainly from birth to retirement, is known. This did not happen and the number of 'surplus' greyhounds in Britain – and what becomes of them – is no clearer today than in 2007.

Using the most recent retirement figure of 8,000 dogs per year<sup>74</sup> (compared to 11,000 in the APGAW report) the number of surplus dogs produced in Britain each year still sits above 10,000. The number of young dogs who disappear during rearing may also have declined since the APGAW report; however, the 2012 University of Bristol study into greyhound welfare found that current statistics for these dogs were unavailable<sup>75</sup>.

As most of the dogs raced in Britain today (83%) originate from Ireland, the surplus of young greyhounds is likely to occur there. This was confirmed in evidence given by Michael Watts, Honorary Secretary for the Society of Greyhound Veterinarians and spokesperson for the Countryside Alliance Ireland, to the Northern Ireland Assembly during consultation on the Welfare of Animals Bill 2010<sup>76</sup>:

“Welfare problems in England tend to revolve around what happens to greyhounds that are too old or too lame to race anymore and whose owners no longer want them. The problems arise here with a younger cohort of greyhounds that are not fast enough or are injured and are unable to start racing.

We have a large number of young greyhounds that, in the nature of things, are perhaps not handled much, not very socialised and not house trained. In many cases, they do not make good pets. There are a large number of them, and what are we to do with them?

In England, there is a large number of older, retired dogs that were used to a level of human contact and to regular handling, and they are much easier to rehome. Furthermore, there are 60 million people in England who might like to rehome them, as opposed to about 4 million people in Ireland. When I say Ireland, I mean all 32 counties. The breeding of greyhounds in Ireland is regulated by the Irish Coursing Club, which considers Ireland, for better or worse, a 32-county entity. For that reason, we have no separate figures for Northern Ireland.

With England’s much larger population, they have to rehome approximately 10,000 unwanted greyhounds per annum. Therefore, in a nutshell, we have more younger, less rehomingable dogs, and fewer homes for them to go to.”

Michael Watts,  
Society of Greyhound Vets and  
Countryside Alliance Ireland

This does not paint a very comforting picture of the lives, and more likely the deaths, of unwanted greyhounds bred in Ireland to supply the British racing industry. Furthermore, rehoming thousands of retired greyhounds every year is not an easy task and should not be promoted as the solution to the industry’s overproduction and wanton disposal of greyhounds.

### 3.4.2 Greyhound adoption

The competition facing greyhounds seeking good quality homes is extremely high. A survey conducted by the Dogs Trust revealed that 111,986 stray and abandoned dogs were picked up or handed into local authorities across the UK between July 2012 and July 2013, with a quarter of these dogs given to rehoming centres<sup>77</sup>.

These 27,996 dogs will compete directly with unwanted greyhounds for a limited number of suitable homes. Moreover, this figure only includes dogs who are handled by local authorities and not those given directly to rehoming charities, so the true figure must be much higher.

It is simply unacceptable for the greyhound industry, a commercial enterprise turning over millions of pounds a year, to add to the burden already faced by rehoming charities.

The primary adoption agency for greyhounds retired from the British racing industry is the Retired Greyhound Trust (RGT), which operates more than 72 local branches across Britain and is funded largely by the racing industry (40% of its 2012 funding came from the British Greyhound Racing Fund, while BAGS and the satellite broadcaster each donated a nominal amount to the charity<sup>78</sup>).

In 2012 RGT found 3,910 homes for greyhounds<sup>79</sup>, all homes that could have been filled by other needy dogs. Independent greyhound charities, along with other dog rehoming centres, find homes for approximately 1,500 retired greyhounds every year and do so without financial aid from the industry.

The GBGB believes that a further 1,500 are rehomed directly by owners and trainers<sup>81</sup>, leaving a minimum of 1,000 retired greyhounds unaccounted for every year.

### 3.4.3 Euthanasia

Despite both the APGAW and Lord Donoughue calling on the industry to track all dogs from ‘the cradle to the grave’, neither track, trainer nor owner are currently required to provide evidence that an unwanted dog has been rehomed upon retirement. The GBGB does require owners to register their dogs’ retirement within 28 days and provide information as to disposition (e.g. retained by owner, given to animal charity, euthanased by a licensed veterinarian); however, **no supporting evidence of this action is required**<sup>82</sup>.

Owners are therefore free to say that dogs have been given to animal charities when they have in fact been euthanised, and it is impossible to know how many unwanted dogs are actually killed by licensed vets or meet the same fate as the thousands buried in Seaham.

In fact, two years after the killing fields in Seaham were uncovered, the same journalist (Daniel Foggo) revealed that a knacker’s yard in Hertfordshire was still routinely killing unwanted racing greyhounds for £20 each using a captive bolt pistol<sup>83</sup>. When confronted by the journalist, the owner of the knacker’s yard, Alan Waller, said:

“Greyhound trainers basically just get rid of their dogs when they are no longer any use to them and they can’t rehome them. It’s just one of the things that happens in an industry where there’s too many dogs at the end of the day and they can’t rehouse them all.”

Additionally, the GBGB retirement form includes the category ‘injury not treated on economic grounds’ as a legitimate reason for euthanising a dog<sup>84</sup>, despite claims that the industry is ‘*striving to ensure that no greyhound is unnecessarily put down once its racing career is over*<sup>85</sup>.’

As the GREY2K USA Worldwide injury analysis (outlined in section 3.3.3.) revealed, 16% of the injury reports available showed that the dog was subsequently euthanised or died. It is unclear how many of these killings were done purely on humane grounds and how many were an economic decision.

The callous disregard some trainers have for their greyhounds was highlighted by RGT co-ordinator Amanda Ainsworth in a 2011 Greyhound Star article<sup>86</sup>. She recounts the story of a trainer bringing one of his dogs into a RGT centre and telling the staff: ‘*There is no point in trying to rehome this one. He’s a nasty bastard, you might as well put him down now.*’ The staff found the dog to be very gentle mannered and he was rehomed within a few weeks.

### 3.4.4 Selling dogs for research and dissection

Killing unwanted greyhounds not only saves the owner money; according to newspaper reports it can also make the owner money. An undercover investigation by The Sunday Times in 2008 exposed a licensed greyhound breeder and owner selling unwanted dogs to Liverpool University to be killed and dissected for teaching and research<sup>87</sup>.

Charles Pickering, the largest greyhound breeder in Britain at the time, offered to sell dogs to the undercover reporter for £30 each and said that that he sold 30 dogs a year at this price to the University, but could easily provide more if required.

All of these dogs were young and healthy but unsuitable for racing because they did not chase the lure or were simply too slow. Pickering also supplied yearling greyhounds to licensed trainer Richard Fielding who gave his older unwanted dogs to the University for free. Fielding told the reporter:

“I got shot of 10 old ones last year. Liverpool is a godsend in that respect because they are used for a good purpose.”

A separate Sunday Times investigation that same year revealed that an Essex veterinary clinic was putting down healthy greyhounds and selling the body parts to the Royal Veterinary College (RVC).



An undercover reporter posing as an owner found that staff at the Greyhound Clinic agreed to kill greyhounds for £30 each, even though he told them the dogs had 'nothing wrong with them'. The RVC then bought dead greyhounds from the clinic, but insisted the dogs be healthy before they were euthanised<sup>88</sup>.

In response to a public information request made by GREY2K USA Worldwide, the RVC revealed that it had used 300 greyhound bodies between 2006 and 2013. The dogs were used almost exclusively for anatomical dissection classes. The RVC stated that the dogs

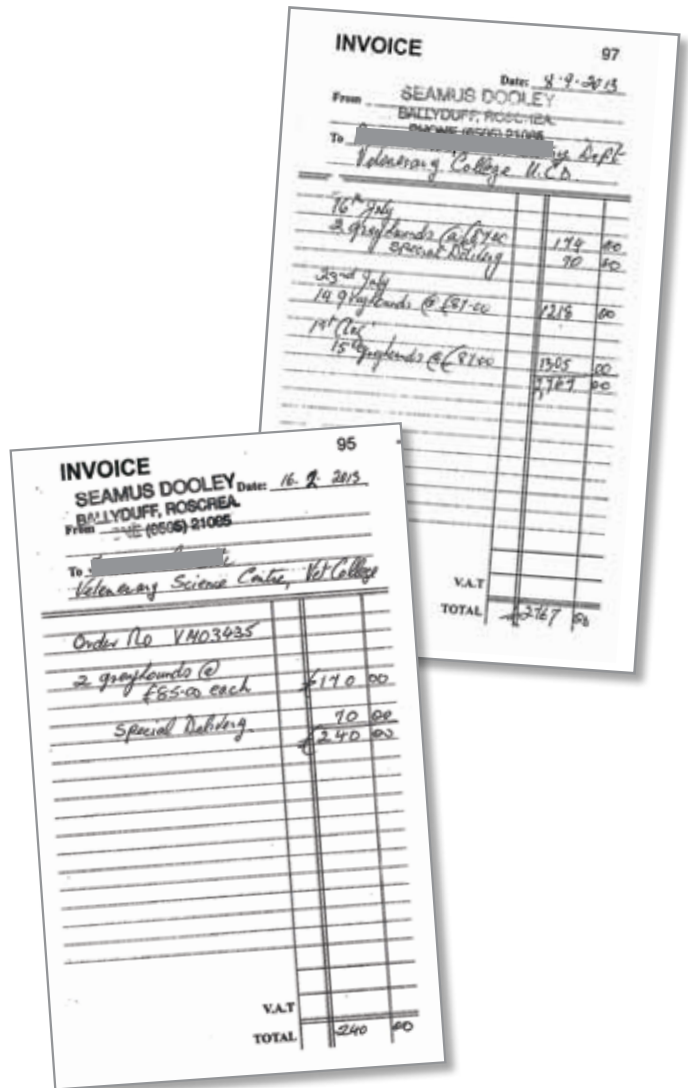
“...were euthanised due to various reasons, commonly an inability to integrate with other dogs or for other medical reasons”<sup>89</sup>.

Further newspaper reports and public information requests reveal that more than 550 unwanted or injured greyhounds have been killed and used in teaching or research in British Universities since 2006 (Table 3, p30). Most of these dogs were used in veterinary anatomy classes; however Liverpool University used greyhound body parts in research aimed at improving the racing industry as recently as 2010<sup>90</sup>.

Although all of these institutions claim the dogs were not euthanised specifically for their teaching or research purposes, they do provide tracks, trainers and owners with a convenient way of disposing of unwanted dogs – as evidenced by Richard Fielding’s comment above<sup>91</sup>. Of even greater concern is University College Dublin’s continued practice of buying unwanted greyhounds and killing them specifically to use in veterinary anatomy studies. In response to GREY2K USA Worldwide’s public information request, the University provided receipts dating from 2006 to 2013 demonstrating that it had purchased a total of 212 greyhounds, at the price of between £80 and £87 each, all from a racing greyhound owner named Seamus Dooley.

Thirty-three dogs were purchased in 2013. The records make clear that all of the dogs were alive when purchased and killed by the University for the express purpose of teaching anatomy to veterinary students.

As many British racing greyhounds are returned to Ireland when no longer wanted<sup>92</sup>, they could be victims of Mr Dooley’s lucrative trade.





**Table 3: Numbers of greyhounds used for teaching and research purposes since 2006.**

<b>University</b>	<b>Number of greyhounds used 2006 to present</b>
Royal Veterinary College	300 <sup>93</sup>
Liverpool University	93-95 <sup>94</sup>
University of Cambridge	70 <sup>95</sup>
University of Edinburgh	20 <sup>96</sup>
University of Bristol	64 <sup>97</sup>
University of Nottingham	8 <sup>98</sup>
University of Glasgow	3-4 <sup>99</sup>
University College Dublin	212 <sup>100</sup>

### 3.5 Failure of self-regulation

This report makes clear that self-regulation has not and is not working to protect greyhound welfare.

Further evidence is provided by the GBGB's 2012 annual report which shows that although greyhound welfare was the most common category of complaint received that year, less than 25% of complaints were acted upon<sup>101</sup>. Even when trainers and owners are found guilty of neglect, cruelty or drugging their dogs, the penalties handed out by the GBGB are pitiful and provide no deterrent to future offending.

Greyhounds in the independent sector receive even less protection under self-regulation as the statutory requirements do not include even basic safeguards such as kennel inspections, drug testing and retirement provisions. The lack of laws and regulations for the welfare of greyhounds in Wales and Scotland is an even greater cause for concern. As the Welfare of Racing Greyhound Regulations 2010 only cover England, dogs racing on independent tracks in Wales and Scotland receive no protection except basic animal welfare laws.

The inconsistencies and errors in industry figures and publications uncovered during the production of this report further highlight the inability of the industry to protect greyhounds effectively. Moreover, the continued lack of data available on important issues such as injury rates and outcomes, importation of dogs from Ireland and the exact number of surplus dogs produced each year – as well as what becomes of them – suggests that either the public is being kept in the dark deliberately or the regulating bodies are so incompetent that they genuinely do not know what is happening in these crucial aspects of the industry.

Lord Donoughue's report highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability for protecting greyhound welfare, stating:

“Good welfare is derived from good regulation and good regulation is derived from having the correct governance structures in place... the whole proposition is dependent on robust, adequate and transparent funding.”

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain was established to address Lord Donoughue's concerns on this issue. Yet, since its inception in 2009, the GBGB has not published a strategic plan outlining specific measures it will take, or has taken, to safeguard greyhound welfare nor any figures on greyhound injury and retirement. This stonewalling has left some in the industry, as well as greyhound welfare organisations, deeply suspicious of the GBGB and its commitment to greyhound welfare.

“There is a view being widely expressed that earmarked funds currently being generated within the industry are not sufficiently finding their way to caring for greyhounds.”

Greyhound Trainers Association,  
Statement of Case, 9th May 2014<sup>102</sup>

“We are simply not getting the information and statistics that we keep requesting, Barry (Faulkner) Chief Executive of GBGB ignores our requests or sends us round the houses to his Chairman (Maurice Watkins) or to other officials. It's no longer working. We want to know what's happening to all the greyhounds that retire each year... no matter how we ask the question, Mr Faulkner won't answer it and I have had enough... I'm tired of being patted on the head.”

Clarissa Baldwin OBE, Chief Executive of Dogs Trust  
and chair of the Greyhound Forum, Racing Post,  
February 2014<sup>103</sup>

The Greyhound Trainers Association announced in May 2014 that it is calling for a Formal Independent Review of the Greyhound Board of Great Britain to include an audit of Lord Donoughue's recommendations<sup>104</sup>, demonstrating how little has changed within this industry since 2007.



## 4 What Future?

### 4.1 Decline of the British greyhound racing industry

No one can deny that the British greyhound industry is in fast decline. Lord Donoughue reported an attendance figure of 3.2 million for licensed tracks in 2006<sup>105</sup>, but by 2012 that number had declined to 2 million<sup>106</sup>, a decrease of 38%.

This drop in attendance impacts on the number of viable tracks, leading to a drop in the number of licensed tracks in Britain from 30 in 2006 to 24 today. Even the remaining greyhound tracks are struggling to turn a profit, with a recent GBGB report revealing that, without the income from additional activities such as motorsport, car boot sales and on-site nightclubs, restaurants and hotels, there would be *'an overall negative movement of cash from these businesses'*<sup>107</sup>. Independent tracks have also faced closures, with 14 operating in 2006 and only nine today.

Fewer tracks need fewer trainers and only 835 registered with the GBGB in 2013, compared to 975 in 2010, a decline of 14%<sup>108</sup>. More worryingly for the industry, 45% of current trainers are aged over 60 while only 9% are aged 40 or younger<sup>109</sup>.

The decrease in licensed trainers is linked to a similar decrease in the number of dogs licensed to run on GBGB tracks, down 14% in 2013 (7,500 dogs) compared to 2009 (8,672 dogs). The continued decline in greyhound numbers has led to an increase in the number of races taking place without the full complement of six runners. In 2013, 7,900 races took place with fewer than six runners<sup>110</sup>.

Add to this the catastrophic decline in British greyhound breeding outlined in section 3.1, and the industry's future looks far from promising. Indeed, according to a GBGB survey conducted in 2013, 54% of greyhound owners are not confident about the future of racing<sup>111</sup>.

The major decline in racecourse attendance figures, combined with increased alternative betting opportunities, has led to a decline in greyhound betting revenue. According to the GBGB's 2014 report on the economic impacts of the industry, the gross win from British greyhound racing (the money not won by betters and thus retained by the betting agencies) was £237m in 2012/13, down 21% from £300m in 2008/09<sup>112</sup>.

This has a profound impact on the funding available for licensed greyhound racing as the British Greyhound Racing Fund (BGRF) – the official funding body for licensed racing – is financed entirely through a voluntary levy on bookmakers<sup>113</sup>. Currently 92% of betting offices contribute 0.6% of their annual greyhound betting turnover to the BGRF, amounting to an income of £8m in 2013<sup>114</sup>.

This money is then allocated to different aspects of the industry, including welfare, integrity, marketing and prize money.

While it is difficult to have sympathy with betting agencies' dwindling profits, the decline in revenue they receive from greyhound betting does impact on greyhound welfare. The BGRF's income, and therefore the money available to the licensed greyhound industry, has declined by 43%<sup>115</sup> since 2008 when it peaked at £14m<sup>116</sup>.

This income will shrink by a further £800,000 in 2014 as Betfair has now withdrawn its funding from the BGRF<sup>117</sup>. According to Tom Kelly, BGRF chairman, the withdrawal of Betfair money is *'undermining its ability to support greyhound welfare, especially the rehoming of retired dogs'*<sup>118</sup>, demonstrating that the industry is quick to cut welfare provisions in favour of profits.

However, the latest financial figures for the GBGB, which is funded directly by the BGRF, reveal that it may not be able to protect its profits much longer either. According to its annual reports, from 2009 to 2012 its turnover decreased by 26% and its profits decreased by 98%<sup>119</sup>. Even the industry acknowledges that this downward spiral is unsustainable:

**"Greyhound racing in Britain has got itself into a terrible fix with no solution in sight."**

Editor of the Greyhound Star,  
October 2013<sup>120</sup>

**"It is widely recognised amongst grassroots greyhound trainers, welfare organisations and owners that the sport of greyhound racing is in an ever deepening crisis."**

Greyhound Trainers Association,  
Statement of Case, May 2014<sup>121</sup>

**As the licensed greyhound industry is funded almost exclusively from betting revenue, declines in the sport's popularity have a direct impact on greyhound welfare.**

**Attendance at GBGB tracks  
down 38% since 2006**

**Gross gambling win down  
21% since 2009**

**Licensed industry income  
down 43% since 2008**

**Greyhound welfare  
declines**

## 4.2 The way forward

The government has allowed racing industry demands to take precedence over greyhound welfare for too long. New legislation mandating fundamental changes to industry practice must be enacted – and enforced.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has already committed itself to a review of the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations in 2015 and we believe that genuine improvements in greyhound welfare will only be achieved if the recommendations made in the 2007 APGAW report are now implemented in full.

Specifically, we are calling on Parliament to demand industry action on the issues of overbreeding and 'surplus' dogs; track safety and injury rates; drug use; greyhound tracking and adoption – as outlined at the beginning of this report.

We urge Parliament and the greyhound racing industry to demonstrate a genuine commitment to safeguarding the welfare of greyhounds from 'the cradle to the grave' by embracing and implementing our full set of recommendations.

Until such time, greyhound racing has no place in a nation that values animal welfare as highly as Britons do.





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**Some of the lucky greyhounds that have found happy homes in the UK**



Photos: Grey2KUSA Worldwide








Emma Milne and Annette Crosbie  
with rescued greyhounds.






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