



**Race Injury Review Panel
analysis and recommendations
1 January 2020 - 30 June 2020**

Foreword

On 8 February 2019 the NSW Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission (the Commission) established the Race Injury Review Panel to provide a mechanism for the systematic review of serious and catastrophic injuries to greyhounds racing on NSW tracks.

The [Terms of Reference](#) for the Panel are located on the GWIC website.

The fundamental purpose of the Race Injury Review Panel process is to better understand the underlying causes of racing injuries and to develop and implement preventative measures aimed at reducing the incidence and severity of injuries to racing greyhounds.

This report provides an overview of the collective findings of the reviews conducted by the Race Injury Review Panel for the second half of the 2019-2020 financial year (1 January 2020-30 June 2020).

How to interpret this report

Due to the multi-factorial nature of racing related greyhound injuries, each Panel uses its individual and collective experience, knowledge and judgement to form a view about the likely causes of each incident reviewed by the Panel.

Therefore, both the findings of each individual review and the collective findings in this report should not be interpreted as being indisputable. They are 'judgement' based assessments reflecting the best endeavours of each panel to form conclusions about causal factors.

Particular care should be taken in the analysis of these reports due to the relatively small number of panel reviews conducted.

This report includes a full year's trend analysis that, over time, will provide a more reliable picture of the contributing causal factors of Major II and Catastrophic greyhound injuries.

An explanation of the Panel's review process

All Catastrophic injuries that result in the euthanasia of a greyhound on welfare grounds and any sudden deaths occurring at race meetings are subject to a detailed case by case review by the Panel. The Panel also analysed the majority of serious (Major II) injuries. During this reporting period, the Panel analysed the race replays and all supporting information in relation to 25 Catastrophic and 67 Major II injuries. Ten injuries classified as Major II injuries, due to the incapacitation time imposed, were deemed not to be serious injuries by this Panel and were classed instead as Major I injuries. Examples of these types of injuries include fractured toes, a sprained hock and gracilis muscle tears, which all received >42 days off racing.

The Panel analysed all contributing factors to each case according to the following criteria:

1. Race-related: race factors such as interference, collisions and falls
2. Track-related: the conditions of the track at the time of the incident; track maintenance history and environmental influences
3. Greyhound-related: the greyhound's racing history, including frequency of racing; its prior experience and performance; breeding and genetics; training influences; previous injuries.

The Panel meets monthly and keeps a log of contributing factors and recommendations. Feedback is also provided to GRNSW where track issues are judged to be contributing factors

Analysis

1. Catastrophic injuries: Contributing Factors

Month	Race Factors	%	Track Factors	%	Greyhound Factors	%	Catching Pen	%	Unknown	%	Total
Jan	5	72%	1	14%	1	14%	0		0		7
Feb	2	100%	0		0		0		0		2
March	4	66.6%	0		0		1	16.6%	1	16.6%	6
April	3	75%	0		0		1	25%	0		4
May	1	25%	1	25%	1	25%	1	25%	0		4
June	1	50%	0		0		1	50%	0		2
Total:	16	64%	2	8%	2	8%	4	16%	1	4%	25

The majority (64%) of catastrophic injuries in the first semester of 2020 were as a result of racing incidents, usually collisions resulting in a fall. The most common injuries resulting in euthanasia were compound radius and ulna fractures (44%) followed by complicated fractures of the hock joint or

ankle (20%). The average field size for catastrophic injuries this semester was 7.4 greyhounds per race (range 5-8).

Catching pen incidents accounted for the next highest category (16%), most as a result of collisions in the catching pen. The Panel is monitoring this trend in catching pen injuries to establish the frequency and has included this as a special category of injury for ease of monitoring. The Panel has recommended a review of research into decoy lures and other catching pen interventions, including camera installation to monitor greyhounds in the catching pen in order to minimise the risk of collisions occurring. The panel will review historical data of catching pen injuries and consider trends.

Greyhound factors (8%) occurred where it was considered that the previous racing frequency or injury history of the greyhound may have predisposed it to the catastrophic event. These could be chronic muscle or joint injuries that were being managed; or where the greyhound had been rested for some time and/or had only raced once in 30 days; or where the greyhound had an excessive number of lifetime starts and was over four years of age. Fitness may play a role in these injuries and will continue to be monitored as a contributing factor. For catastrophic injuries this semester, the total number of lifetime starts ranged from 1 start to 71 starts, with an average of 24 starts. Inexperienced greyhounds that were younger with <5 starts or were racing at a new venue for the first time also accounted for some of these injuries. Training and racing patterns of younger greyhounds should be considered further as a contributing factor for catastrophic injuries.

Injuries which occur in the absence of apparent racing or greyhound contributing factors (4%) are of concern. In these instances, the conditioning and rearing, nutrition status and genetics of the greyhound may all be factors for future study.

Track related factors (8%), usually occur in combination with a racing incident. This semester saw two Catastrophic injuries and one Major II occurring at the same race meeting at Maitland track, where track surface concerns may have contributed. As a result, GRNSW made the decision to close the track pending an expert inspection and report being compiled by UTS. Maitland track underwent a major renovation By the GRNSW track maintenance team following these incidents. Another track-related Catastrophic injury occurred at The Gardens, with a safety rail subsequently installed around bends at The Gardens track to prevent a future injury. The majority of Catastrophic injuries this semester occurred around a turn (17/25).

2. Major II injuries: Contributing Factors

Month	Race Factors	%	Track Factors	%	Greyhound Factors	%	Catching pen	%	Unknown	%	Total
Jan	6	75%	0		2	25%	0		0		8
Feb	5	29%	2	12%	6	35%	1	6%	3	18%	17
March	1	16.6%	0		4	66.6%	0		1	16.6%	6
April	0		1	16.6%	4	66.6%	0		1	16.6%	6
May	10	72%	0		3	21%	0		1	7%	14
June	12	75%	0		3	19%	0		1	6%	16
Total:	34	50.5%	3	5%	22	33%	1	1.5%	7	10%	67

The Major II or serious injury analysis reveals that the highest contributing factor (50.5%) were race factors. Interference causing major collisions and falls remains the most prominent cause. The average race field size was 7.3 (range 5-8). Turns were the most common area for interference in a race. The most common injury was a simple hock (ankle) fracture and the second most common was a metatarsal (foot) fracture.

Greyhound factors make up the second most frequent contributing factor (33%). Previous injury history was most represented as well as racing frequency. The average total lifetime starts for greyhounds suffering a Major II injury this semester was 40, with a range of between 1 and 135 starts represented.

A trainer's representative joined the panel deliberations for all meetings. The Commission wishes to thank those trainers who contributed with their insights and industry knowledge of greyhound racing patterns, training practices, racing frequencies, breeding, feeding practices and training tracks. The contributions of trainers to this Panel is invaluable, both to understanding the contributing factors to racing injuries and to the development of strategies that can address these causes. The representation of trainers on the panel will continue into the future.

Injury Prevention Strategies and Responses

The Panel has identified several ideas and strategies for further investigation in order to reduce the incidence and severity of racing related injuries. These include:

1. Investigating the design parameters and behavioural reward systems used in catching pens in order to reduce injury rates in the catching pen. This will require monitoring of greyhounds entering the catching pen via the use of cameras.
2. Examining the feasibility and utility of additional technology and systems to assess track conditions including surface characteristics and camber preparation.
3. Instituting a policy for the safe return to racing of greyhounds that have undergone orthopaedic surgery.
4. Enhanced education for young greyhounds entering racing for the 1st time and the value of trials at tracks for 1st time racers
5. Further investigation into enhanced regulation of factors which appear to be correlated with injuries this year, including:
 - One start in the previous 30 days
 - Racing frequency and total lifetime starts
 - Understanding the prevalence of Bisphosphonate use in racing greyhounds
 - Mandatory retirements
6. Scoping the introduction of additional programs to cater for the foster care for injured greyhounds
7. Introducing a post-mortem program for catastrophic injuries to understand biomechanical and biological factors involved.