



# Being a Greyhound Trainer

Greyhound Welfare & Integrity Commission handbook





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## 1. What trainers need to know

Trainers are expected to have a strong knowledge of greyhound behaviour, education, diet, anatomy and racing form.

**Owner-trainers** can train only greyhounds that they own or own in part (e.g. greyhounds owned by a partnership of which they are a member). Owner-trainers must complete the registration requirements specified by GWIC, which includes completion of a knowledge test based on information contained in sections 1-11 of this booklet.

**Public trainers** can train greyhounds owned by other industry participants as well as their own greyhounds. Public trainers must have had 12 months or more of active experience as an owner-trainer and complete a knowledge test based on information contained in sections 1-12 of this booklet.

Trainers are expected to understand the requirements relevant to the trainer's role which are contained in:

- The NSW Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice [www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/codeofpractice](http://www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/codeofpractice)
- The NSW Greyhound Racing Rules [www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/rules](http://www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/rules)

Trainers should also read and understand the official GWIC policies on the GWIC website. A breach of one of these policies is a breach of the Greyhound Racing Rules. These documents are available on the GWIC website .

Trainers also have obligations under the *NSW Greyhound Racing Act 2017* and the *NSW Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.

Trainers should also understand the different roles played by the Greyhound Welfare & Integrity Commission (GWIC) and Greyhound Racing NSW (GRNSW) in the administration of greyhound racing:

- The **Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission** administers the Greyhound Racing Rules, registers greyhounds and industry participants (including owners, breeders, trainers and bookmakers), employs race stewards, inspectors and on-track veterinarians, and investigates animal welfare and integrity concerns relating to greyhound racing in NSW. The GWIC website contains more information.
- **Greyhound Racing NSW** manages greyhound grading, nomination of greyhounds for races and performance trials, the racing calendar, and distribution of prize money. Greyhound racing clubs are also regulated by GRNSW. The GRNSW website ([grnsw.com.au](http://grnsw.com.au)) includes tutorials on how to nominate a greyhound for a race, and information about the *Greyhounds As Pets* program for rehoming retired greyhounds.

## 2. Setting up and maintaining a good kennel environment

The primary concern when planning kennels and yards must be the comfort and well-being of the greyhounds. The kennel design should also make it easy to feed and care for the greyhounds, and clean and maintain the kennels and yards. The NSW Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice sets minimum standards relating to the construction and maintenance of kennels, sleeping areas, and other enclosures. Participants who have greyhounds in their care must meet these standards.

When planning and building kennels and yards, consider these needs:

- Outdoor space for greyhounds to run, play, socialise, exercise and engage in all the normal activities of a dog should be available every day
- Maintaining your yards in a safe condition may help to prevent injury
- Fences must prevent injury to dogs and unwanted movement of dogs between areas
- Sleeping areas must be dry and comfortable
- Kennels should be easy to clean daily
- Drainage must be adequate, particularly if you plan to clean kennels by hosing
- Shelter must be available to greyhounds while in outdoor yards
- Natural lighting must be available to greyhounds kennelled mostly indoors
- Ventilation and temperature control should be available in kennels, particularly in hot weather
- Disease prevention requires features such as cold storage for fresh food, and hot water for cleaning and disinfecting bowls and equipment
- Pest control requires sealed storage for dry food and for disposal of waste, and prevent access by rodents, insects and snakes
- Security should prevent escape of dogs and ensure they cannot be accessed by unwanted visitors
- Building materials should be durable, safe, and easy to clean and maintain

The local government in which your training facilities are located may also have requirements related to building, noise and waste management. It is important to be aware of any Council requirements.

Other greyhound trainers may be willing to show you their kennels and provide advice on what works well, and information about the design and building of kennels is available online.

### 3. Care and husbandry

#### Water

Greyhounds must have access to fresh clean water at all times, unless advised otherwise by a veterinarian. The minimum daily water requirement is approximately 50 mL of water per kilogram of body weight (about 2 litres for a large greyhound), and more is required in hot weather and when the dog is exercised frequently.



#### Nutrition

The diet of a greyhound has a big influence on all aspects of its life and racing career, and greyhounds have differing needs at different stages - puppyhood, pregnancy, lactation, racing, retirement, illness and old age.

Premium commercial foods are prepared to ensure all the necessary levels of protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals are present in each meal. Many owners and trainers make this the basis of their greyhound's diet. Other owners and trainers create their own dog food, but special care must be taken to ensure that the diet is nutritionally balanced and complete. It also takes time and requires adequate storage facilities and suppliers for the various ingredients. Fresh ingredients must be kept at the correct temperature to ensure that they do not spoil or become inactive.

Many feeding regimes used by trainers rely on experience, but your dog's diet and any dietary supplements should be discussed with your veterinarian. Supplements given in too-large amounts can cause kidney and liver damage, lead to joint pain, bone damage and reduced muscle function.

Do not feed spoiled or rotten food to your greyhound, as this challenges its immune system. Sloppy or voluminous stools, poor coat, weight loss and lacklustre performance are all indicators of deficiencies in a greyhound's diet.

#### How much food?

The amount of food required by a greyhound will be influenced by the time of year (increased requirements in the colder months), the individual greyhound's metabolism and activity level, and any stresses on the dog's body (such as injury, illness, pregnancy, lactation or rapid growth phase). Each greyhound may have different needs even when in the same phase of life, so ensure that each greyhound gets the correct amount of food to maintain it in peak condition and at correct weight.

A greyhound is only able to eat a certain volume of food in any one meal. If your greyhound is down in condition, divide the daily food over a larger number of smaller meals or increase the energy content of the same volume of food.

Do not feed a greyhound just prior to it exercising, as this diverts the blood supply to the gut rather than the muscles. Most greyhounds race on an empty stomach, although some trainers will feed a light meal a few hours before a race.

Over-feeding is not healthy, including for pups, as it puts stress on developing ligaments and joints and increases the chance of serious injury.

#### Monitoring individual feeding programs

Good trainers constantly monitor each dog's feeding program and make changes to ensure top condition. Record the greyhound's weight and condition weekly, and compare it to written records of how much, and what type of food has been fed, the exercise and training program, and the racing schedule and results. This provides an excellent idea of how the type and quantity of food is influencing the greyhound's condition and performances.

#### After-race nutrition

Most greyhound veterinarians suggest that greyhounds should receive some protein and carbohydrate within 2-4 hours of a race. Greyhounds will also require free access to water for some time after racing, particularly in hot weather.

#### Supplements

There are many different brands and types of supplements on the market, with some specifically formulated for racing greyhounds. Many are not required in an otherwise healthy greyhound that is fed a balanced diet.

The decision to supplement a greyhound's diet needs to be based on the greyhound's individual needs, including stress, illness, activity level and physical condition.

Be careful about how to use them and in what quantity and combination. Be very careful about what ingredients are in each supplement, as some contain products such as Cobalt and Arsenic that may cause a positive swab. If you are not sure what an ingredient is for, discuss your choice of supplement with your veterinarian.

Multivitamin and mineral supplements will cover most of the greyhound's requirements if there is any deficiency in the diet. Calcium and phosphorus need to be given in the correct ratio to ensure the best result, especially in young, growing pups, and too much of one without the other can be as dangerous as a deficiency.

Any injectable substances must be administered under the direction of a veterinary practitioner. All supplements and injectable substances must be individually labelled and kept in their original container or packaging. Follow the instructions on the label, including storage instructions that ensure the product does not spoil or lose its potency. Expired supplements and injectable substances must not be used on greyhounds and must be disposed of according to relevant legislative requirements.

## Electrolytes

Many dogs do not need electrolyte supplementation, and excessive electrolytes can lead to dehydration. The best way to detect any electrolyte deficiencies is with a blood test performed by your veterinarian, which will show which electrolytes, if any, are lacking. Your veterinarian will then be able to prescribe the best treatment.

Greyhounds with electrolyte imbalances or deficiencies tend to:

- have poor form and particularly struggle in distance events
- have increased respiratory distress after a run
- have poor coats and hydration
- drink and urinate more than usual after racing.

## 4. Use of medications

Every trainer should know which medications are prohibited and which are exempted by the Greyhound Racing Rules. These include permanently banned prohibited substances which may not be used on a greyhound or in the possession of a participant at any time, and substances which must be below a threshold in a greyhound during a race.

Trainers must maintain a treatment record book for each greyhound - a complete health care and veterinary history - as required by the Greyhound Racing Rules. The treatment record book must include all records of the administration of any Schedule 2, 3, 4 or 8 drugs (by date, time, dose, route of administration, drug name and name of person giving the drug) and any prohibited substances including any injectables.

Trainers should fully understand the nature and proper use of any medications they use. This includes medications prescribed by a veterinarian as well as any natural therapies or supplements.

## Why must greyhounds run drug free?

The integrity and reputation of the sport depends on every greyhound having every chance of a fair run. Breeders of greyhounds must be able to select breeding animals based on their true performance, rather than results that are due to artificial enhancements.

Racing drug free is also critical to the welfare of the greyhounds. Greyhounds should be allowed to fully recover from any illness or injury. Medications may mask pain and injury sufficiently to get the dog to run, but the risk to the dog of aggravating the injury or breaking down completely is significant and unacceptable.



## Withholding periods

Medications are broken down (metabolised) by the greyhound's liver or kidneys. 'Metabolites' are substances that are the result of the metabolism of drugs and can be detected in samples of urine.

Every medication has a period of time during which it will be able to be detected by laboratory testing of a urine swab. A withholding period is the length of time after treatment that an animal should be excluded from racing so that the medication or its metabolites are either eliminated from the dog's system or have dropped below a threshold specified in the Greyhound Racing Rules. Each medication has its own withholding period.

However, there is variation in how long it takes individual greyhounds metabolise and excrete different drugs, so it is wise to add some extra time to the withholding period to ensure the greyhound does not return a positive swab. The sensitivity of laboratory tests is continually improving, and much smaller amounts of drugs and their metabolites can be detected.

Veterinarians have access to the recommended withholding periods for common medications given to greyhounds, but the trainer is the person responsible for ensuring a greyhound does not return a positive swab.

## Prescription medications

Prescription medications can only be prescribed in accordance with the relevant State and Commonwealth legislation by a veterinarian that has that animal under their care, and after taking all reasonable steps to ensure a therapeutic need exists for that substance in that animal. This means that a veterinarian can only give a prescription medication for a particular problem in a particular greyhound, and the veterinarian must have a genuine relationship with the client and patient.

Prescription medications include antibiotics, analgesics (pain killers) and anti-inflammatories. Drugs in this category are generally those that fall into Schedule 4 or Schedule 8 of the NSW Poisons legislation, and are listed in GAR 79A and GAR 83. The tight rules about prescribing Scheduled medications means that having any prescription medicine in your possession which is not correctly labelled and prescribed by a veterinarian is illegal.

A veterinarian will be given written instructions as to how the medication is to be administered, how often, by which route, and how it needs to be stored. The amount supplied will be enough for a complete 'course' and it is important that the greyhound receives all of the prescribed doses. Safely dispose of any remaining medication.

Do not stop giving antibiotics early because the dog looks better. A full course is far more likely to completely resolve the problem and prevent the dog developing

antibiotic resistant strains of the bacteria.

Do not administer any medication prescribed for one greyhound to another greyhound. Some owners and trainers think they can dose a sick greyhound with medication left over from another greyhound. This may mean the greyhound receives the wrong dose, or a dose which is out-of-date and less effective, or medicine for a problem it doesn't have.

If your greyhound is not performing to the level that you expect given its training history, a thorough check by your veterinarian including a blood profile should be considered.

## Non-prescription medications

Medications available without prescription includes those sold at pharmacies, pet stores, produce merchants and online. Many of these medications are prohibited substances under the Racing Rules. Medications such as these can cause drug interactions (a combination of drugs that might inactivate a drug's effect or cause toxicity) or cause positive swabs. Seek advice from a veterinarian before administering these products to a greyhound.

## 5. Requirements for keeping a greyhound healthy

Preventative health care ensures that your greyhound is always in the best possible condition, and helps to prevent injury and disease.

Preventative health care includes things such as vaccinations, worming, and controlling external parasites. Ignoring these things can lead to problems not just with the individual greyhound, but disease which may spread throughout your kennels and affect other greyhounds.

## Vaccination

Vaccination stimulates the body's immune response to create immunity against diseases. By vaccinating an animal, its body is prepared for the time where it may be exposed to the real disease. This means that the body fights off the disease much quicker and more effectively than an animal that has no vaccination protection.

Please refer to the GWIC website for the most up-to-date requirements for vaccinations. Your veterinarian may also recommend additional vaccinations depending on what diseases may be found in your area.

Greyhounds must be vaccinated at specific times in their lives:

- Each pup in a litter must be vaccinated to a C3 level at 6-8 weeks of age before the litter registration will be processed by GWIC
- A greyhound must be vaccinated to a C5 level at or after 12 months of age before it can be named for racing

- A female greyhound must be vaccinated to a C5 level within the last 12 months before it will be approved for breeding.

A C3 vaccination works against three worst killer diseases of dogs

- **Canine Parvovirus**, which causes very severe vomiting and foul-smelling, bloody diarrhoea. It is most commonly seen in young puppies and has been known to kill entire litters
- **Canine Distemper**, which causes weepy eyes and nose (thick yellow pus), vomiting and diarrhoea, and can lead to central nervous system damage that is irreversible
- **Canine Adenovirus**, (Canine Infectious Hepatitis) is a disease that causes damage to a greyhound's liver. Symptoms include jaundice, vomiting and loss of appetite.

A C5 vaccination works against the same three diseases as the C3, as well as the two most common causes of **Canine Cough**: Canine Parainfluenza and Bordetella bronchiseptica. Canine Cough (also called Kennel Cough) is a complex disease and outbreaks can be caused by any of 20 different viruses, bacteria and other micro-organisms even among C5 vaccinated dogs.

## Parasites

### Worms

Intestinal parasites (commonly called 'worms') live mainly in a greyhound's stomach, intestines and blood, but they can damage vital organs. These parasites live and reproduce by stealing nutrients from the greyhound, reducing the greyhound's ability to perform at its best.



The most common group treated for are the intestinal worms such as roundworm, hookworm, whipworm, flea tapeworm and hydatid tapeworm. Intestinal worms are controlled in most cases by dosing the greyhound with an 'all-wormer' tablet. Tablets are sized according to weight, and the weight of each greyhound on the day of dosing must be known to ensure they get the right dose.

Worming should take place at least every 3 months for adult dogs, but is commonly done monthly to help prevent contamination of the dog's environment with worm eggs and reduce the rate of reinfection.

Check closely that the worm tablets you use treat the full range of worms. Some products do not kill the hydatid tapeworm which can cause serious and difficult-to-treat disease if transmitted to humans. Hydatid tapeworm infection is usually introduced to dogs from offal and raw meat. Worm tablets containing the ingredient levamisole can cause a positive swab

Some trainers choose to use worming products that are not licensed for use in dogs. This should only be done after discussion with your veterinarian as it can be dangerous or fatal where dose rates are miscalculated. Using worming products not licensed for use in dogs also means you have no legal standing against the manufacturer if things go wrong.

Control of internal parasites also requires careful management of the greyhound's kennels and yards by frequent removal of faeces, sanitising indoor areas, and leaving outdoor yards vacant for a period to allow heat, cold and sunlight to kill worm eggs in the soil.

Parasite resistance (where the worms become resistant to the drugs used to control them) is a developing problem, so it is recommended that you plan a worming program with your veterinarian that helps avoid this problem developing.

### Heartworm

Heartworm is spread by mosquito bites, meaning the dog can be infected without having come into contact with another infected dog. Symptoms of heartworm infestation include the signs of heart failure – tiredness, intolerance to exercise, moist cough and shortness of breath. Treatment is possible but unpleasant, so preventative treatment is preferable.

The preventative can be given as a daily or monthly tablet, or a once a year injection. Discuss with your veterinarian the prevalence of heartworm in your local area and the areas where your greyhounds travel.

### External parasites

The most common external parasite of greyhounds is fleas. Fleas must feed on blood to be able to lay their eggs. Most of the flea lifecycle (egg, larval and pupal stages) is spent in the dog's housing, bedding, or the soil in outdoor runs, with the time spent infesting an animal only the short adult stage of their lifecycle. Fleas are generally not spread from dog to dog, but are usually picked up from a contaminated environment.

Flea bites and the greyhound's chewing and scratching that follows the bites can cause quite significant damage to their skin. Greyhounds can also become allergic to flea bites, with symptoms including long-term scratching, hair loss and reddened, thickened skin.

Traditional flea shampoos and rinses will only kill the adult fleas on the dogs on that day and will not stop

fleas re-infesting the dog. Products that continue to have a flea killing effect long after they are applied, and that contain active ingredients that inhibit the hatching of any eggs in the dog's environment, are recommended. Some products combine the treatment of intestinal worms, heartworm, fleas and mites into a single spot-on liquid or tablet.

The most cost-effective method of preventing flea infestations is to:

- Clean housing and sleeping areas daily
- Wash bedding and rugs weekly
- Provide regular flea prevention treatment according to label instructions
- Change the flea prevention treatment to one with a different active ingredient every 1-2 years.

## **Nail and foot care**

Care and attention to the feet and nails is vital to ensuring top performance on the race track. Long, untrimmed nails can lead to unusual or abnormal forces being applied to the joints and ligaments of the feet and legs, predisposing the greyhound to an injury that could be career-ending, or cause injuries to other greyhounds.

Many greyhounds will wear down their nails naturally. Some greyhounds have unusual nail wear or are on soft surfaces most of the time, meaning that trimming the greyhound's nails to ensure that they never get to a length that could cause problems with its stance or gait will be necessary

Each toenail contains a 'quick' which is a fleshy core filled with blood vessels and nerves. The nail grows down over this quick and extends past it. Knowing where the quick ends is essential to ensuring that it is not cut whilst trimming the nail, which can be particularly tricky if the greyhound has black nails. It is always better to trim small amounts of nail frequently than to cut into the quick and cause bleeding and pain.

Any trimming should be done to end at least a millimetre below the lowest point of the quick. Use sharp cutters or a small file. Filing can help reshape nails that grow unevenly or those associated with toes that have been damaged (such as 'sprung' toes) and where the nail no longer curls towards the ground.

Foot care also includes checking the area under the feet for sand burns, split webbings and sandtoe. Greyhounds who run on sand tracks are particularly prone to foot injuries, especially to the webbing between the toes and around the nail bed.

## **Sandtoe**

Sandtoe is the traumatic inflammation and/or infection of the nail bed, and is caused by the nail digging into the sand while running. Nail beds become swollen, reddened and may bleed or show some type of

discharge. They become sensitive to touch. Occasionally the skin around the nailbed may split and flare outwardly.

Treat sandtoe by gently cleaning the area with an antiseptic solution, wiping in a direction down the nail away from the nailbed. After cleaning, antiseptic creams can be applied. If the inflammation or infection does not start to heal within 2-3 days of applying first aid, or you are unsure, seek advice from a veterinarian.

To protect the nail bed from becoming sore again, wrap several layers of a 2-3 mm wide tape around the nail close to the nail bed to act as a sand-deflector, ensuring first that the nail is clean, dry and free from any oily cream to ensure that the tape sticks.

## **Sandburn**

Sandburn is abrasions and/or cuts on the underside of the feet, below the toe bones, which can be seen when the toes are spread. It is often caused by either abrasive sand runs or weak flexor tendons leading to overspread toes during exercise, which allows the foot to rub against the sand. Affected feet will be red, swollen and painful.

Small cuts and burns require gentle cleaning to avoid further damage to the sensitive area, followed by an antiseptic to prevent infection. Large burns or deep cuts should be seen by a veterinarian, as should any small sandburn areas that have not started to heal 2-3 days after treatment has begun.

Strengthening the flexor tendons of the foot through physical massage can be a good mechanism to aid in the prevention of sandburn.

## **Skin care and bathing**

Healthy skin and a shining coat are indicators of good nutrition and care. Greyhounds that are fed inappropriate diets will have a poor coat, often with dry, flaky skin.

Control of external parasites such as fleas will also impact on skin and coat condition, as even a few flea bites can lead to bacterial infection and septic sores. Not enough bedding can lead to skin damage and calluses or pressure sores.

Overbathing, the wrong shampoos and products such as flea rinses can leave the coat dry by stripping the natural oils that help maintain normal skin health and protection. Washing once a fortnight is usually plenty, unless a veterinarian advises differently. In between baths, the coat can be maintained by brushing regularly to remove the dead hair.

Make sure that washing products are designed for dogs. Human shampoo is not recommended because a dog's skin has a different pH to humans and could become irritated with the wrong product.

Greyhounds should be thoroughly dried after a bath to prevent chilling. In winter, it may be necessary to keep the greyhound in a heated room until it is fully dry. Do not put a coat on a wet dog, as this can lead to skin problems and the coat can become damp and cold.

## Dental disease

Dental health is often overlooked in greyhounds, with a high level of dental and gum ('periodontal') disease seen even in young greyhounds. It is particularly common in greyhounds that have a soft diet that does not require much chewing.

Dental disease can become a source of infection to the rest of the body, as the bacteria in the mouth slowly leaches into the bloodstream. The low-grade infection that results can significantly affect the health and race performance of the greyhound.

Dental disease can largely be prevented by regularly giving greyhounds raw bones or chew toys that will naturally clean the teeth.



## Managing stress

Good greyhound trainers will monitor greyhounds for early signs of stress and poor acclimatisation, and slow or change the exposure to new skills and experiences. For example, if signs of stress appear after the greyhound is moved from a large enclosure to small race kennel housing, a careful trainer may move the greyhound to a pen of larger size. If the greyhound then shows signs of reduced stress, a program of gradual introduction to smaller pen sizes can be tried. If the greyhound does not show obvious signs of improvement over a period of two to three days, a veterinarian should be consulted.

Keeping a written record of signs of stress during education and training and the stimuli for that stress can improve the management of the greyhound. Ignoring signs of stress may result in the development of fixed behaviours like constantly drinking or licking, bopping up and down, lip quivering or chewing on bedding (called 'behavioural stereotypies').

Animals that are stressed, frightened or anxious tend to breathe faster or pant, even when the weather is not hot. Some animals will have a similar response when excited and anticipating an event (another form of stress). Too much barking or panting can change the pH of the blood and can alter the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood. This can be a problem with dogs who will not settle when travelling, or who bark constantly when they are kennelled for a race. This can lead to respiratory alkalosis (an increase in pH of the blood due to the excessive loss of carbon dioxide) which can then predispose the greyhound to other problems if they race or trial hard.

## 6. Injuries

### Signs of injury and sickness

If you know what your greyhound looks like when it is healthy and well, you can become better at picking up the subtle changes in your greyhound's behaviour or gait that may suggest your greyhound is injured or unwell.

Some injuries are very obvious, but some injuries can be so mild they take an experienced and watchful eye to detect. Being able to identify these minor changes can mean that the injury is treated early and correctly, reducing the risk of it worsening and potentially ruining the greyhound's career.

Spend time each day watching each of your greyhounds to become familiar with the individual quirks and peculiarities of their behaviour and gait, so you will notice the little things that may indicate your greyhound is 'off-colour' or is feeling pain.

Common signs of illness include:

- less appetite
- more tired than usual
- coat appears rough or fluffed up (can be a sign of fever)
- hair loss
- coughing
- discharge from nose and/or eyes
- vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- belly distended or swollen
- urinating more or less frequently than normal
- red or brown coloured urine
- increased water consumption
- poor performance during training, trialling or racing
- poor performance in the second part of a race when the first part was normal.

If you suspect your greyhound may be unwell, seek veterinary assistance as soon as possible.

### **Assessing gait and movement**

Lameness may be very obvious, with the greyhound not wanting to put weight on one of its legs, or it may be harder to see. Often the best way to assess the gait is to have someone else 'trot' the dog for you so you can watch it move. Trotting is a two-beat gait with two legs moving together at the same time. Lameness may show up as a change to the rhythm of this beat, or an increased head bob on one of the two strides. The greyhound's body will be trying to protect the injured leg by taking some weight off it, and this leads to the head being lifted up as the sore leg touches the ground. Trotting the greyhound in a circle, first to the left, then to the right, may also help highlight an injury.

Watching the video of a race or trial may help assess if anything looks abnormal in the greyhound's galloping gait such as running wide, slowing into the corner, 'throwing' a leg, 'flicking' the tail or a shortening stride.

### **Feeling for injuries - examining your greyhound**

Get into the habit of examining your greyhound by feeling with your hands and fingers. By following a set procedure, you can examine the greyhound from head to toe in a relatively short time and won't miss anything along the way.

Feel for soreness, heat, swelling, or changes in shape and feel. Tense tight muscles are often protecting an injury, reduced range of movement of a joint indicates pain or damage, and hot, painful areas indicate active inflammation. Assess both sides of the body and compare them.

The book '*Care of the Racing and Retired Greyhound*' (Blythe LL, Gannon JR, Craig AM, Fegan, DP, 2007) suggests examination techniques both for common muscle injuries and for a more thorough evaluation. Videos are available on the internet, and you can ask your greyhound veterinarian to give you a demonstration of how to perform examinations and what to feel for.

### **Muscle injuries**

Not all injuries will lead to changes in gait or movement. A low-grade muscle injury may not lead to any changes in the greyhound's gait, but will decrease its speed and may predispose it to further injuries.

If the muscle is torn or ruptured, the damage should be easier to detect. The muscle will be sore, the greyhound may be limping, or there will be swelling or fluid accumulation at the site of (or below) the injury. Bruising is often seen at the site if the area has little hair.

If a muscle injury is suspected or detected it is important that it is dealt with properly straight away. The amount of damage and swelling needs to be minimised and the greyhound should be rested from running or training until the muscle has had time to fully repair. It is vital that the greyhound does not continue to race or trial. Injured muscles can cause a greyhound to be 'off-balance' and can lead to the development of 'track leg' - a bony callus that develops due to the elbow striking the inside of the back leg.

When a muscle is damaged, muscle pigment (myoglobin) can leak into the bloodstream where it is passed out as red or brown coloured urine - something all greyhound trainers should be looking out for after a run or race. (Red or brown coloured urine can also be a sign of bleeding within the urinary tract or some diseases.)

Severe muscle damage can progress to a condition called rhabdomyolysis (acidosis) which is caused by excessive stress and requires urgent veterinary attention.

Depending on the severity of the injury your veterinarian may recommend rest, ice packs, anti-inflammatory treatment, massage, stretching or the use of one of the therapies designed to help heal the muscle tissue. If your greyhound is treated with anti-inflammatories, ask about the withholding period as these drugs will lead to a positive swab. It is vital that your greyhound does not run on anti-inflammatories as they simply mask the pain and continuing to run is likely to result in more severe injury.

Early return to function is important for the physiotherapy of the injury. Once the muscle has had some time to repair, the dog should be gradually brought back into full work - not returned immediately to its former workload.

The rest needed during the recovery phase leads to a reduction in fitness, and it is easy to put too much stress on the newly healed tissue too early if you overdo it. It is also important that the greyhound receives a proper warm up and cool down to further prevent damage to the muscles.

## Track leg

Track leg is the common name for swelling on the inside of the tibia (the main hindleg bone between the knee and hock) and is most commonly seen on the left leg.

It is caused by the outer point of the elbow colliding with the inside of the tibia as the greyhound runs. Usually this happens when an injury unbalances the running style, such that the elbow turns out or the hindleg inadequately arcs around the elbow.

Track leg ranges in seriousness from mild to severe, and the treatment varies accordingly:

**Mild track leg** is described as a little puffiness after one or two glancing blows during a run. Treat minor swelling with an icepack held in place for 5-7 minutes, 3-4 times daily.

**Moderate track leg** shows more significant and obvious swelling with subsequent thickening and scarring. Treatment of moderate track leg requires a veterinarian. The most common treatment involves draining the fluid, reducing ongoing fluid build-up and bandaging the site.

**Severe track leg** presents as a break or rupture of the skin with bleeding and ongoing oozing from the site. Treatment of severe track leg must be undertaken by a veterinarian.

In all cases, treatment also involves attempting to identify and correct the cause for the abnormal gait leading to the development of the track leg.

## Feet and paws

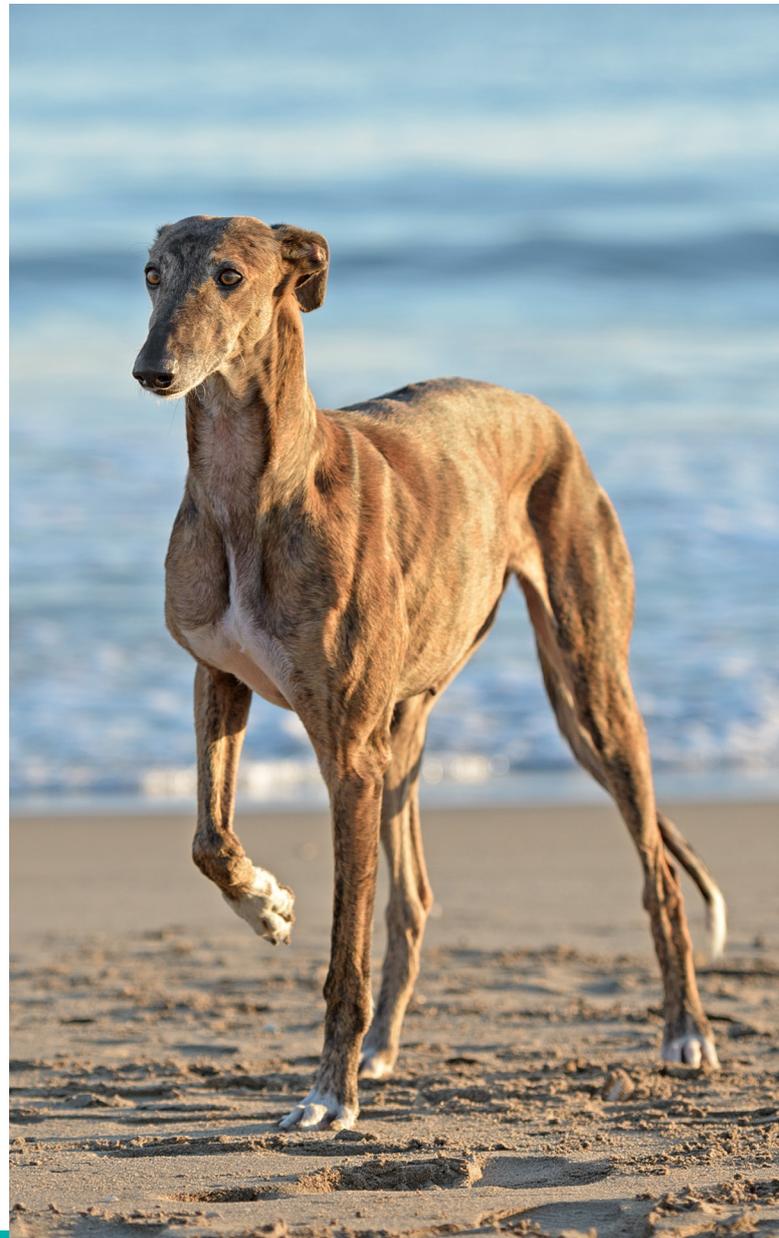
Feet need to be checked thoroughly after every run as foot problems will very quickly affect performance. Examine the greyhound's feet for cuts and cracks, uneven wear, papillomas (warts) and corns (painful growths in the pads). The nails and nail beds along with the webbing between the toes also need to be thoroughly inspected. Each toe should be gently flexed and extended to check for damage or soreness, and any problems investigated.

It is not uncommon for the side ligaments of the toe to be damaged or stretched leading to 'sprung' toes or 'dislocated' toes. These injuries are very painful, especially with the huge pressures applied to the toe during cornering in a race. Webbing injuries such as sand grazes are often due to problems with the action of certain ligaments or tendons.

Another important foot problem is 'sesamoiditis' which is inflammation or damage to the small sesamoid bones that are located at the back of the top toe joint where the top toe bone joins the shins. Sesamoiditis is a very common injury detected during the education phase of training, leading to painful toe joints with a reduced range of movement. The pain caused by these sesamoids can lead to problems turning, jumping out of the boxes and changing direction at high speed.

Pay particular attention to these joints during an examination and if you notice that the joint is swollen or painful, or if the toe does not move as far as it normally does, then you should have the area checked by a greyhound veterinarian. Many cases of sesamoiditis will resolve with rest and treatment, but others require veterinary intervention.

Having any painful toes checked early by your veterinarian will provide your greyhound the best chance of returning to full speed and will reduce the risk of long-term problems developing.



## Micro-fractures

Micro-fractures or hairline fractures are tiny fractures of the bones that occur when the forces placed on the bone are greater than its strength.

They often occur in a younger greyhound beginning its training because its bones are still growing and hardening. Micro-fractures are also common in greyhounds at their peak, while training and racing frequently on circular tracks. The forces applied to the bones while running around curves is greater than when greyhounds run on a straight.

Common contributing factors of micro-fractures include:

- training and/or racing on hard surfaces, which increases the forces on the bones
- training and/or racing too often, preventing the bone from having enough time to heal
- high intensity training involving tight or multiple turns.

Micro-fractures may go unnoticed initially, but generally present in a greyhound as any of these:

- mild heat, pain and swelling in the area of the fracture
- mild lameness
- affected gait
- poor cornering.

The main treatment is rest from its normal racing and training activities. In some cases, a greyhound may need periods of isolation to prevent it from becoming excited and causing additional stress on the bone.

If the area of the micro- fracture is swollen or hot, apply icepacks to the affected area for 5-7 minutes, 3-4 times per day until the swelling and heat reduces. However, if no improvement is seen within 24-48 hours, seek veterinary attention. Heat in a greyhound's leg could be a sign of an infection that may require antibiotic treatment, or may indicate that the micro-fracture is actually a larger fracture that requires different treatment.

Always seek veterinary advice if you suspect your greyhound has a micro-fracture. Your veterinarian will provide advice on:

- rest periods and when your greyhound is likely to be ready to resume training or racing
- medication and/or treatments to support fracture healing
- the greyhound's diet, exercise, training and racing regime to try and establish how the micro-fractures occurred and how to prevent them from occurring in the future
- alternative exercise options such as swimming that will help you to keep your greyhound fit while they are healing.

Preventing micro-fractures involves:

- feeding a nutritionally balanced diet that is appropriate to the age and activity level
- seeking low impact exercise options for building and maintaining your greyhound's fitness between races and while recovering from injury
- having your training facilities assessed by a track expert to determine whether your surface is too hard or too soft
- regular examination of your greyhounds for soundness.

Also, pay attention to 'warm-up' and 'cool-down' techniques before and after a race. Warm-up exercises for greyhounds may include light jogging or brisk walking, rubbing or massage, and gentle stretches. In cold weather, the greyhound may also wear a warm coat right up to the time of racing to maximise the circulation to the muscles.

If you ignore the injury, it is likely that a minor problem may worsen very quickly into a more serious, potentially career-ending one if the greyhound continues to trial or race.

## Physiotherapy and massage

Physiotherapy and massage can be used to help prevent injuries by preparing the greyhound's muscles for a race and can also be used to help treat problem areas when there has been an injury to a specific area. Many greyhound veterinarians will recommend massage of injured areas, and gentle stretching and flexing to assist with improving the range of movement of a joint. Do not overdo either the massage or the stretches as this can cause damage if a joint is pushed too far. Ask your greyhound veterinarian to give you a demonstration of the right amount.

A range of physiotherapy treatments are available. The best treatment will depend on whether the aim is to prevent or treat an injury, and what sort of injury it is. Find out which treatment is best for your greyhound, how often you should be doing it, and for how long. Incorrect treatment can lead to further problems as well as a worsening of the original injury.

Some old practices in greyhound medicine such as 'blistering' (applying caustic solutions to the skin over bones and joints) are ineffective and can lead to prosecution under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (POCTAA)* if it leads to skin burns and damage to the deeper structures. 'Firing' of any animal is prohibited under POCTAA.

***If a person other than you or a veterinarian performs massage or treatment of a greyhound in your care, the person must be registered by GWIC as an industry participant approved to perform treatment. (Greyhound Racing Regulation 2019)***



## 7. First aid

Basic principles learned in a human first aid course can be applied to greyhounds. The aim is to maintain the basic bodily functions needed for survival, whilst recognising what is injured and protecting it from further damage. Every trainer should always have a simple first aid kit available.

Most injuries suffered by a greyhound will be minor, but it is important to be able to recognise which injuries you can deal with yourself, and which injuries need to be seen by a veterinarian. Some injuries may look very minor but involve serious underlying damage.

All animals can bite if they are in pain, so consider muzzling an injured greyhound before examining or moving it to protect yourself and others.

### Serious injuries

If the greyhound has broken a bone, is bleeding, or seems to be unable to stand or sit up, take it immediately to a veterinarian. If possible, apply pressure to any bleeding wound with finger or hand pressure, or a pressure bandage. If you are close to a veterinarian and can move the greyhound there gently, do not splint or apply a support bandage to an injured or broken leg as this can cause a lot of pain. Instead, try to gently support the injured leg as you load the greyhound into the car. If you are further from a veterinarian, then splinting (or applying a support bandage to) the leg may be warranted.

Make sure the greyhound has comfortable bedding for the journey, and do not offer any food or water, in case it needs to be sedated or anaesthetised by the veterinarian.

A heavy towel or blanket can be used as a stretcher to lift and carry the greyhound to the car.

### Bite wounds, punctures, and lacerations

The biggest problem with most seemingly minor skin wounds is the risk of infection, especially if it gets deep into the muscle layers. Infection can take hours or days to become fully established after initial injury.

If wounds are seen and treated early on, the risk of infection is greatly reduced. In cases of deep wounds such as punctures from dog fights, antibiotics need to be started within the first 6 hours to have the best chance of preventing serious infection. Do not wait until the wound looks infected. By the time the area around the wound is red and swollen, a lot of tissue damage which may lead to permanent scar tissue has been triggered, and recovery time will be much longer.

If the wounds appear to be deeper than just the skin, or if there is a large tear that might require stitching, the wound should be inspected by a veterinarian as soon as possible. The veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medications to assist healing. They will also be able to give advice about the recovery time and rehabilitation needed to ensure the greyhound returns to normal functioning.

Shallow and small injuries of less than 5-10mm in length with minimal bleeding can usually be treated at home:

- Gently clean any foreign matter from the wound with a disinfectant suitable for human use, diluted as recommended on the bottle. If none is available, use a sterile saline solution.
- Pat the wound dry with a clean cloth and apply an antiseptic cream recommended by a veterinarian.
- Place a sterile gauze square over the wound and bandage to hold the gauze in place and to prevent the wound from becoming dirty. The gauze and bandage should be changed daily until the wound has scabbed over.

If the wound does not scab over completely within 2-3 days of initial treatment you must seek veterinary help as the wound may have been deeper than initially thought or has become infected.

If the wound begins to swell, becomes swollen, painful or hot or begins to show signs of discharge, contact your veterinarian immediately as an infection may be developing.

Larger wounds (more than 10mm), and wounds that look deep or are accompanied by lameness, swelling, pain or sensitivity when touched, should be seen by a veterinarian immediately as there may be infection.

### Sprains, strains and muscle tears

Maintaining your yards in a safe condition may help to prevent sprains, strains and muscle tears.

Sprains, strains and muscle tears can influence a greyhound's future race career, so it is vital that they are dealt with appropriately. Knowing which injuries will respond to rest and treatment and which need to be seen by a veterinarian is an acquired skill. If you are not sure, take the greyhound to a veterinarian for a professional opinion.

## 8. Illnesses

### Vomiting and diarrhoea

Vomiting and diarrhoea can be caused by sudden diet changes, viral, bacterial, protozoal or parasitic infection, as well as being symptoms of many more serious illnesses.

It is important to notice quickly any vomiting or changes to the faeces of greyhounds. Many of the causes of vomiting and diarrhoea can be passed from one greyhound to another, especially if the kennels are not thoroughly cleaned.

Generally, one or two vomits may not be anything to be concerned about as long as the dog is otherwise bright and alert and is drinking adequately. Temporarily stop food and ensure that they are drinking small amounts of fluids regularly. Closely observe the dog for signs of discomfort, abdominal pain and/or swelling and watch its behaviour. If the greyhound looks unwell, has a swollen abdomen or is refusing to drink, it needs to be examined by a veterinarian immediately.

Repeated vomiting can quickly dehydrate a greyhound and cause electrolyte imbalances so early intervention is best.

Diarrhoea that is very watery or has blood in it is a definite concern and should be investigated immediately. While fresh blood is obvious, be mindful that digested blood in faeces will appear black and tarry and is generally from higher in the digestive tract, such as the small intestine.

If the faeces are not formed or soft, and the greyhound is otherwise well, then change the dog to a bland, low fat, highly digestible diet for 24 hours and ensure that it continues to drink well to maintain hydration. Some dogs are very sensitive to diet changes and will have soft faeces for a day or two if you switch food brands or suppliers.

If there have been no changes to the greyhound's diet, then diarrhoea may be a symptom of something more serious. In highly anxious greyhounds, the stress of travel or other incidents can sometimes lead to diarrhoea, but this is usually obvious as the diarrhoea occurs at the time of the stressful event and usually resolves once the greyhound returns to its normal kennel environment.

If the greyhound is bright and the diarrhoea continues for more than 24–48 hours, or at any time the greyhound looks uncomfortable and is straining to defaecate, then immediately have it checked by a veterinarian.

### Bloat

Bloat (gastric dilatation volvulus or GDV) can occur in any large, deep-chested breed of dog. It begins when the normal filling and emptying process of the stomach becomes altered and gas accumulates. The stomach is anchored to the body so that if it fills up with gas it can twist. This can also twist the spleen, leading to serious interruption to the blood supply of the stomach and spleen which is life-threatening. It does not take very long for the weakened and stretched stomach wall to die if it has no blood supply, leading to a rupture of the stomach.

Bloat can kill a dog very quickly, so get help urgently. Even with surgery, some dogs die from complications, so the earlier you notice a dog with a distended abdomen the better.

Bloat is linked to stressful events, dietary factors (including sudden food changes) and excessive eating (if a dog gets into the food supply and gorges itself). There may be a link to exercise immediately before or after eating or drinking. Some breed lines appear to have a greater genetic predisposition to bloat.

### Obstruction

Obstruction of the intestine is most likely to occur in greyhounds who eat foreign objects such as bedding or rocks. If those objects lodge in the intestinal tract, they will prevent movement of food. Obstructions can be partial or complete. The most common symptoms are abdominal pain (the dog is sore in the belly and may be hunched up), vomiting and a reduction in faeces.

One of the most dangerous items to cause obstruction is corn cobs, so these should never be placed in compost where dogs may have access. Choose bedding and kennel items carefully for greyhounds that chew their bedding. Contact your veterinarian promptly if you suspect that a greyhound has eaten something that may cause an obstruction. Some items that cause a severe blockage may have to be removed surgically, and quick removal prevents damage to the bowel wall.

### Canine Cough

Probably the most common respiratory disease in greyhounds is Canine Cough, also known as Kennel Cough. This can be caused by any of 20 different viruses, bacteria and other micro-organisms, including some which can also affect people. The C5 vaccine protects against the two major causes of this disease.

Signs that a greyhound may have Canine Cough include a dry hacking cough for a week or so, and it may be lethargic or off its food. During this time, the greyhound should not be raced or trialled as it will struggle to cope with the increased demands for oxygen, and place other greyhounds at risk of disease.

Any increase in respiratory rate can also trigger coughing spasms, and may result in pneumonia which can be fatal. It is possible for greyhounds to be infected and spread the disease to other dogs before showing any symptoms such as coughing or sneezing.

Canine Cough is highly contagious and will quickly spread between dogs that share air space. Immediately isolate any greyhound you notice coughing and seek treatment. In some cases, vaccination boosters (usually intra-nasal or oral) will be recommended by your veterinarian to limit the spread and severity of the disease.

Coughing is a symptom of many diseases - not just Canine Cough - including tonsillitis, pneumonia and heart disease, so it is important to have the reason for any cough investigated by a veterinarian.

### **Tonsillitis**

Tonsillitis is a common respiratory problem in greyhounds. Inflamed tonsils are larger, red and swollen, and can usually be seen quite easily in the back of the throat if the dog allows its mouth to be held open.

Inflamed tonsils can be quite painful, and the dog may gag or cough as it tries to swallow. Some dogs may go off their food, often running to the food bowl as if they are hungry, but then being reluctant to eat. Tonsillitis may affect racing performance both because the infection strains the immune system, and because the inflammation obstructs airflow in severe cases. Consult a greyhound veterinarian about treatment.

## **9. Educating a greyhound**

### **What is education?**

The most important part of a greyhound's education is the early socialisation that begins at 3 weeks of age and develops the dog's fundamental skills for coping with education for racing, the track environment, and successful rehoming after its racing career is over. The best time for a greyhound to develop fundamental skills is between 3 and 20 weeks of age, the period of its life when it is least fearful and has an in-built desire to explore, but it is a lifelong process.

The more a young greyhound can learn about its environment, what things to seek out, ignore and avoid, and what behaviours are acceptable or not, the more likely it will be able to cope with different situations. The greyhound will be more likely to concentrate on chasing a lure, rather than being distracted or nervous in the race day environment.

The next part and shorter part of greyhound education is track education ('breaking-in'), the process of teaching a greyhound the skills required to become a successful race dog.

This includes teaching the dog to chase the lure, how to be loaded into starting boxes, and how to make a clean start. How the greyhound is educated can influence its entire racing career.

Track education usually happens when the greyhound reaches 12-13 months of age, although it may be anywhere from 12-15 months of age. Sometimes a young greyhound may be very immature at 12 months and might need longer to mature before beginning track education.

Most professional track educators will have the greyhound for about 4 weeks, during which the dog goes through an intense program of training. Trainers who conduct track education themselves may choose to spread the lessons out over a longer period, taking more time to develop the dog's skills.

### **Early socialisation**

Early socialisation is essential to creating a friendly, adaptable, cooperative and trainable greyhound through experience of different environments. Greyhounds that have not been well socialised with humans and other greyhounds, and who have not had a wide exposure to different environments and experiences, can appear nervous, distracted, or unable to settle and develop odd behaviours. They may struggle to adapt to a kennel environment, and their fear response may limit or block their chase motivation, making them difficult to educate for racing.

From puppyhood a greyhound should be getting used to the kind of things that it will face on a race day and in its life after racing, including:



- smells – other greyhound and other kinds of animals, food, people, vehicle exhaust
- noises – loud or strange noises, radio, loudspeaker
- surfaces – the feel of different surfaces such as carpet, sand, concrete, bitumen, hot surfaces, metal and rubber, and walking up and down stairs and ramps
- travelling in a car
- crowds of people
- movement of banners and flags
- being handled by strangers
- having their teeth and paws examined
- standing on heights such as a veterinary examination table

Even trainers planning to use a professional track educator can still teach their greyhound many skills that will prepare it for racing:

- teaching the greyhound to walk calmly on a leash
- confinement to a typical racing kennel and starting box
- travelling in a dog trailer
- teaching the greyhound to come when called
- playing chase games with toys that simulate the lure.

### Using a professional track educator

Many professional track educators offer a great service and are knowledgeable and patient with young dogs. When choosing a professional track educator, consider whether they have too many greyhounds at the same time, with little time to devote to the individual needs of each dog. Ask other experienced trainers about which educators get good results and care for greyhounds to a high standard. Arrange to visit the educator's property to look at the condition of the kennels and the greyhounds in their care. Look at whether the dogs are happy and in good condition, or show signs of stress or fear.

Look carefully at the condition of the educator's training track and whether it is well maintained. Poor track maintenance can predispose young greyhounds to injuries which could potentially ruin any chances they had of having a race career.

Also consider whether the educator handles the dogs gently or roughly. You are looking for someone who inspires confidence in a young dog.

Greyhounds must have a 12-month C5 vaccination before they commence track education, to protect them against any diseases that other greyhounds may bring into the kennels.

### Getting feedback on how a greyhound has performed in track education

Most professional track educators will have supervised the beginnings of many greyhounds' careers, so they will have a good idea of which greyhounds are educated at an above average level and which are not. They only have the greyhound for a short time and will base their opinions on what they see during that time. Some greyhounds educate well, meaning they learn the required behaviours, and are chasing in good times for their level of development. Others will educate poorly, meaning that they have struggled with some of the skills, or are not running good times for this stage.

Unfortunately, this is a time when some greyhounds are rejected as potential racers, but sometimes this rejection is decided too early or without giving the greyhound enough chance to be successful.

If the greyhound does not educate well, the owner may be told that the greyhound will not make it as a racer. However, there are many examples of greyhounds that have not educated well but have been given additional time to develop, have gone on to educate the second time, and have had a successful race career. As a trainer, your experience and knowledge is likely to be part of the decision about whether to retire the dog as a pet immediately or give it more time to mature. Some remedial training or a different approach may make the difference. Consider the breeding of the greyhound, how it has been reared and trained prior to going to the educator, and its level of maturity before deciding what to do.

### Educating a greyhound yourself

Many trainers, especially those with only a few dogs, prefer to conduct track education themselves so that they have control of what happens to their greyhound. If you have also reared the pup yourself, then you have the chance to really put in the early socialisation foundations well before the dog reaches track education age.

By doing the track education, trainers can also ensure that the greyhound pulls up well from each run and any injuries are detected early and dealt with before they become a threat to its career.

However, it is important that you do not hurry the process and are prepared to invest the time and effort to ensure that the young greyhounds are being adequately socialised and are developmentally mature before you embark on the training process. Be patient, with care of the greyhound at the forefront of your priorities, and don't give up first time.

## Encouraging chasing behaviour

Greyhounds have been bred for hundreds of years for their chasing ability. This instinct is inherited, and only needs encouraging – you do not have to teach a greyhound to chase moving objects, you just have to encourage it.



From 5-6 weeks of age onwards, use a toy, squeaker, squealer or another type of artificial lure to encourage pups to chase and play. These can be wiggled by hand, dragged along the ground, or hung from a rotary clothesline or bullring and moved. This training opportunity is often lost as young pups are not played with enough, particularly if they are simply moved from the breeder's property to a commercial rearing facility.

Even if you do choose to send your pups to a rearing facility, take the time and effort to do regular training at a young age. Avoid rearing facilities that have so many pups that they only have time to feed and water the pups and clean the yards. Facilities that have staff that do some training or play with the pups each day are far preferable, as socialisation and early encouragement will make training in later life stages much easier. Also look for a rearing facility that allows you to regularly visit your pups to work on handling, teaching the pups to walk on a lead and play chase games.

Chase games can occur at any age and are the first step in teaching greyhounds to chase the lure. Play in small groups and with each pup individually. Playing in groups can encourage competition, but it is important that each pup gets to 'win' so that you are not just encouraging the bigger pups to play and teaching the smaller ones they don't have a chance. For shy pups, one on one play is probably better to encourage confidence.

Once the pups are interested in chasing the toy lure, begin dragging it along the ground for them to chase. Teach them how to 'hand-slip' by having one person hold the pup and the other drag the toy lure whilst running away calling the pup. Once the pup is showing interest and is trying to break free from your hold, they can be released to chase the lure.

## Getting the greyhound fit

Greyhounds need to undergo a fitness program that helps them develop the right muscles for running, along with the cardiovascular (heart and lung) fitness required to finish a race. Increasing fitness is achieved by giving the greyhound a chance to free-gallop each day, either in a long straight run, or paddock, or at a facility designed especially for greyhounds such as a slipping track.

Slipping tracks are a fenced straight track of either grass or sand. Being safely fenced, the greyhounds can be allowed off leash to run, often being released by one person at one end, and either being called to the other end by someone else or being tempted by a drag lure.

It is possible to increase the greyhound's fitness using walking exercise, but it is less likely to increase the heart rate to a level that is going to lead to the long-term improvements that you are seeking. It also takes a lot longer for the greyhound to reach race fitness with this method. Walking is not wasted exercise though because it helps expose the greyhound to the wider world, teaches it leash manners, gets it used to travel and can be a useful variation in a training program to keep them mentally fresh.



## Stages of track education

The first week of track education is usually spent encouraging chase behaviours and getting the greyhound to chase a lure. Once the greyhound is chasing the lure reliably, it can be hand slipped over a short distance.

Once the greyhound is pursuing the lure properly and has completed a number of hand slips at the trial track without any problems, introduce the starting boxes. A greyhound that learns to jump out of the boxes well has a distinct advantage.

Teaching the boxes must be done gently and in a positive manner so that the greyhound does not get frightened or hurt in the process. If your greyhound has not had positive exposure to starting boxes, you will need to take this step very slowly and be guided by the reactions of your greyhound.

Once the greyhound is in the box, the front is brought down slowly and closed. It is important that they are not frightened by the closing of the lid, so avoid banging it down. Make sure that no part of the dog is caught or trapped in the door.

Once the greyhound is loaded, and the boxes are closed, a toy or lure can be used to encourage the greyhound to stay at the front of the box. The lure can then be brought around, and the greyhound released to chase it. By now the greyhound can be allowed to go about 300 metres as it will have been running well over the 200 metres or more prior to starting box training.

This is then repeated, with the dog loaded from the front again the next time it runs. Hopefully, the dog will be getting the hang of jumping out and then chasing the lure. If the dog has been good, then the next time it runs, it can be loaded from the back with the front of the boxes closed. The first few times it is loaded from the back, it is a good idea to have a second person with a toy lure at the front of the box.

This encourages the dog to move to the front of the box and ensures it does not try to turn around in the boxes.

It is important that the greyhound views the boxes as a good thing, as an indicator that they are about to have the opportunity to have a run after the lure. What you teach them at this point is really setting the greyhound up for its entire racing career. If it is not coping well with this step, or you are having trouble despite taking it in small steps, it may be that the greyhound needs some help from a professional educator. It is better to address the problem early, rather than let it get into bad habits which can then be hard to break later.

## Looking out for injuries and soreness

After each run, the greyhound should be thoroughly checked all over for signs of soreness or injury. Pups are often awkward at this age, and their bones have not finished developing, so it is a common time for injuries to occur. By checking the greyhound thoroughly after each run, you will quickly notice any soreness, and can respond accordingly. It may be the greyhound needs to be rested until it can recover, rather than running it whilst injured. This is where a private trainer has a definite advantage over a professional educator, as you are not committed to any time frame for the education process.

During education, the dogs are run on a regular basis with free-galloping at home or at a slipping track on the days in between. This is, of course, dependent on the dog pulling up well after a hard run. If it is at all sore, it may be appropriate to consult your veterinarian for advice as to whether the dog needs resting or confinement.

It is important to remember that these are immature greyhounds whose bodies are not yet adapted to run at high speeds around corners, and to make sure the developing bones are slowly conditioned for these increased forces by providing enough rest between big runs.



## 10. Pre-training for racing

### **What is pre-training?**

'Pre-training' is the preparation of a greyhound for racing. The greyhound will have learnt the basic skills required to race during the education process but will then be turned out ('spelled') for a period of 4-12 weeks. Pre-training begins when the greyhound is brought back into work and is prepared to the point that it is ready to run its first race.

### **Why are greyhounds 'turned out' after education?**

The education process can be quite a stressful time for a young greyhound, both mentally and physically, particularly if it has not had enough environmental experience and handling during rearing. They are very prone to injury, and most will have some kind of soreness from the introduction of a new type of exercise that puts pressure on bones and muscles they will not have been using as much previously.

Many greyhounds, up until track education, have only experienced the freedom to run, dig, socialise and enjoy other normal canine behaviours. In track education, they are suddenly expected to learn a lot of new skills. Many greyhounds can find track education exhausting and stressful, although greyhounds that have had good early socialisation may be more likely to adapt well to track education and pre-training.

Most trainers will give their greyhounds a rest after education has finished. The greyhounds may be returned to their yards or kennels and will only have free-galloping exercise – no visits to the track, no loading into boxes and no hard runs. This gives the greyhound time to recover both physically and mentally. It also gives their body time to mature further, which usually results in better co-ordination and increased strength.

### **What happens in pre-training?**

The first step in pre-training involves a transition from the 'paddock' to a 'racing kennel'. Many greyhounds transitioning to race kennels for training and racing will undergo some level of stress. Providing as many positive experiences in race kennels during rearing will reduce the stress associated with this move and is likely to help with pre-training. Some greyhounds may need a slow transition program, where the amount of time spent in the racing kennel is gradually increased over a few weeks.

Greyhounds in racing kennels also need to be provided with mental enrichment. Greyhounds in paddocks have a more environmental features to interact with and natural dog behaviours to enjoy. A kennel environment offers less variety and greyhounds can become bored.

Environmental enrichment in this phase can include:

- playing the radio or music in the kennels to offer variety of sounds
- offering raw meaty bones or 'kong' style toys stuffed with a treat occupy the greyhounds
- offering regular toileting breaks of at least 15-30 minutes throughout the day
- regular time in an open yard, daily in addition to training activities.

The greyhound is usually checked by a veterinarian prior to commencing pre-training to ensure that it is free from injury. The greyhound's diet will be changed to a racing-type diet which is usually higher in fat and energy, but changed gradually to avoid digestive upsets.

### **The first weeks**

The first weeks of pre-training concentrate on increasing the aerobic fitness of the greyhound, so there is plenty of free galloping exercise, along with some trips to the slipping track. Many trainers use 'competition runs' which are long runs side by side which encourage the greyhounds to 'fence run' - chase each other along the fence up and down.

The aim of these first two weeks is to increase the greyhound's fitness and muscle tone, and to bring it to a suitable racing weight. Knowing what race weight the greyhound should be is a skill that comes with experience. Greyhounds at a race weight are typically quite lean. The greyhound will be losing fat but gaining muscle at this stage, so consider the weight in conjunction with the look and feel of its body.

From this point on, keep a training record for the greyhound which records its weekly weight, fitness regime, diet, and the details of every track run it takes.

### **Introducing track runs**

As long as the greyhound is progressing in terms of its fitness, a few short runs can be introduced, usually on a straight track for the first few times. Runs should ideally be scheduled about 5-7 days apart, with the greyhound getting rested in between and taking account of any signs of injury. It should still have free-galloping exercise but will not run any trials on its "days off", giving the greyhound's body time to recover after each hard run.

If possible, take the greyhound back to the track where it was educated and give it a short run (about 300m), loading it into the starting boxes from the front again. The aim is to refresh the greyhound's mind about its previous education. After that the greyhound can be introduced to a different track and loaded into the box from behind.

The greyhound should receive a thorough physical check over after every run, and anything unusual should be checked by a veterinarian. Running a greyhound when it is sore or injured will make the injury worse, and teach the dog that running at the track hurts.

### **Increasing the workload**

If the greyhound has managed to run successfully over 300 metres several times and has pulled up well after the run, consider increasing the distance to 400-450 metres. This is done gradually, and certainly does not happen if the greyhound is not showing signs of improvement at the distance it is currently running.

### **Racing in company**

Greyhounds must also learn to run with other dogs and to compete against them. It is not always the fastest dog that wins a race, but rather the most determined and confident dog.

When first introducing a greyhound to racing in company, it is important that they do not lose their confidence and run against greyhounds of equal ability. Some clubs offer trials where maiden greyhounds are racing only against other maidens. A knock or bump during a race can lead to a loss of confidence and predispose your greyhound to injury.

### **Deciding when to race your greyhound**

Consider running your greyhound in formal trials which have smaller fields but are run under race conditions, to give your greyhound an experience as close as possible to the events of a normal race meeting.

As your greyhound continues to trial competitively and recovers well after each run without injury or soreness, it will be increasingly ready to race. Nominate the dog for a maiden race over a suitable distance determined by the greyhound's performance during training. Generally, young greyhounds are not suited to distance racing. However, if a greyhound is 'slow' over 400-500 metres but is running on strongly at the end, it may be worth trialling it over a longer distance to check if the dog is a possible long-distance 'stayer'.

Your greyhound must be named before it can be nominated for a race. The naming and clearance process can take up to a few weeks, and the application for naming must be accompanied by a vaccination certificate showing that the greyhound received a C5 vaccination at 12 months of age.

## **11. Race training**

### ***What is race training?***

Race training is the maintenance of all the pre-training a greyhound receives. It includes maintaining the fitness required for racing, entering the greyhound in suitable races, and keeping the sport fun and interesting for the greyhound.

### ***What is a normal racing schedule for a greyhound?***

Most greyhounds are raced approximately once a week. If the greyhound is free from injury and suitably conditioned, it may be able to run a little more regularly at a level similar to the frequency of training. Of course, racing is more strenuous and has the added stresses of kennelling, travel and racing at unusual hours of the day. All of this can affect a greyhound's ability to race and recover, and hence affects the interval between races that is necessary to ensure the greyhound is presented in top form.

If the greyhound is racing once every 4-5 days, they do not really need much additional exercise apart from some free galloping in between starts to maintain condition.

If the greyhound does not recover well from a race or is unwell for other reasons, then it should be allowed to recover fully before being raced again. Time off for injury or illness will affect its overall fitness level, and it may be necessary to bring the greyhound back into work gradually until its fitness level returns to that prior to the time off.

It is not uncommon for a racing greyhound to reach its peak form several months into full training/racing. After this some greyhounds will taper off, and you may find that the greyhound needs a break from racing to restore mental and physical freshness.

### **Watching your greyhound's form**

Trainers should watch and monitor their greyhound's performance at each race. A few minor changes may increase its chances of winning, such as a small change to its racing weight or a different distance or track.

If your greyhound has suddenly lost ability, have it checked thoroughly by your greyhound veterinarian. If the greyhound has no underlying illness, injury or dietary deficiency and is trailing well but is not doing well in races, then consider moving to a track where the form is not so strong.

Picking the right track, distance and company to ensure the greyhound has the best chances of success, and making any necessary minor changes to its schedule to ensure it is presented in peak condition, free from injury and soreness, are skills that come with experience.

Good trainers pay close attention to all small details, responding to the individual needs of each greyhound rather than treating them all the same.

## 12. Public trainers

A public trainer is someone who is authorised to train greyhounds owned by others, as well as their own.

Participants seeking registration as a public trainer must have been an active and registered owner trainer for at least 12 months before applying, and must successfully complete a competency questionnaire based on section 12 of this booklet.

Public trainers are generally expected to have a higher level of knowledge of all aspects of greyhound education and training than an owner-trainer. There are a range of useful sources of knowledge available on the web, as well as reference books like *'Care of the Racing and Retired Greyhound'* by Blythe LL, Gannon JR, Craig AM, Fegan, DP (2007).

### Additional responsibilities of a public trainer

Both you and the greyhound's owner have responsibilities as industry participants, and an important part of your role will be to communicate effectively with owners to keep them up to date with their greyhound's progress and collaborate in making important decisions.

While some responsibilities such as retirement and sale of the greyhound are the responsibility of the owner, your knowledge and advice as an experienced trainer will be important in those decisions.

As a public trainer, your reputation is critical in determining how many customers you will get. Your reputation will be based not just on the racing success of the greyhounds you train, but also on:

- the depth and breadth of your knowledge of greyhound anatomy, diet, behaviour, and motivation to chase
- your honest and full communication with owners
- the quality and quantity of your record keeping
- the cleanliness and safety of your kennels and training facilities
- how you treat the greyhounds in your care and whether they respond to you with trust or with fear.

## Record keeping and administrative responsibilities

Keeping detailed records for each greyhound in your care is a valuable way of learning and improving your practices, based on what does and doesn't work. You should record what you do in the care and training of each greyhound, and how each greyhound responds, including:

- nutrition and any supplements
- steps taken to maintain dental hygiene
- weight and body condition
- fitness and training regimes
- 'normal' and any unusual behaviours, fears or anxieties
- environmental enrichment, play and socialisation
- injuries and all treatments
- parasite treatments, vaccinations and all consultations with veterinarians
- the conditions and results of every trial and race.

Apart from assisting you in monitoring and improving the progress of the greyhound, written records are useful for providing feedback to the owner. Each individual greyhound kennel and pen should clearly display a unique identifier that links to the greyhound's record.

Public trainers must also keep accurate records of the ownership of greyhounds entering and exiting their care. This includes:

- full identification information for each greyhound: name, ear markings, microchip number, birth date, colour and markings
- names and full contact details of owners
- dates of entry, exit and change of ownership.

As a public trainer, you are running a business and are likely to have additional administrative responsibilities in regard to:

- taxation
- employees
- workplace health and safety
- planning and Council requirements, including waste disposal
- insurance
- movement of greyhounds onto and off your training property
- business costs.



## Employees

If other people help to look after the greyhounds in your care, whether you pay them or not, you must ensure that they are trained in what you expect them to do, and in safety and emergency practices. You may be held liable for injuries to greyhounds and employees if you do not do so.

As the proprietor or person in charge of your greyhound facility, you are responsible for the overall management and conduct of the establishment and for the welfare of the greyhounds kennelled there. You should supervise each employee until you are confident they are able to do their jobs to the standard you expect.

### Be prepared for clients

As a public trainer, any owner entrusting their greyhound to you will expect to see that you will provide a safe environment and appropriate care. Be prepared to demonstrate your plans for:

- high quality diet management and preventative dental care
- quarantining new greyhounds
- exercise, environment enrichment and socialization
- hygiene, disinfection and disease prevention
- parasite and pest control
- responding to an outbreak of infectious disease
- emergency evacuation.

## Communication

As a public trainer you will be required to keep an owner up to date with the progress of their greyhound. You will also be expected to communicate effectively with veterinarians, track officials and stewards, as well as attend prize presentations and possibly be interviewed by the media. How you present yourself will influence your reputation as a trainer.

Maintaining good written records, including documenting important conversations with owners, veterinarians and track officials, will allow you to support your decisions about the greyhounds in your care.

Some owners will follow their greyhound's progress closely and may want to discuss things in detail with you, while others might just want to know when the greyhound is next engaged to race.

With every owner, no matter their level of interest, it is important that you are honest about their greyhound's performance and discuss any concerns you have when they first arise. This way, the owner can make informed decisions about the greyhound's future management and care.

For example, if a greyhound is not eating well and has been losing some weight, this should be communicated to the owner as soon as possible. Discuss your management plans with the owner and keep them up to date with veterinary findings and progress. Not alerting the owner at the earliest opportunity could make the owner think your care was not adequate or that you were hiding bad news.



## Training agreements

A training agreement reflects the roles and responsibilities of the owner and the public trainer. A signed, written agreement at the outset reduces the chances of confusion that might end up as a major disagreement. It is strongly recommended that you have a written and signed training agreement for each greyhound that you train. A written agreement will also protect you if the owner does not fulfil their responsibilities.

## Payment options

There are a number of options for how a trainer gets paid for training greyhounds for other people. One method is a 'percentage' of stake money, and most such agreements use a 50:50 arrangement, meaning the owner and the trainer each get half of the money the greyhound wins. Any trophies are generally given to the owners. There is generally no training fee, so it is up to the trainer to ensure that they have good dogs that will win races. Both the owner and the trainer should be clear about who is responsible for what costs. The trainer will usually be responsible for feeding, training and transport costs. The owner will usually be responsible for any veterinary costs.

Another other option is for the trainer to charge the owner a 'training fee'. This means that the trainer will get paid a fee regardless of whether the dog races, wins or loses. The training fee generally also includes a percentage of the dog's prize money as well, but generally less than 50%.

## Elements of a training agreement

Elements to consider putting into a training agreement include:

- the training fee, if any
- the percentage of prize money to be paid to each party
- when payment is expected and what happens if payment is not received by the due date
- circumstances in which additional payments and decisions by the trainer and/or owner may be required from time to time such as:
  - what happens if a greyhound is injured during training or racing
  - when spelling might be required
  - what are the limitations on the trainer in the event of an emergency situation where treatment (including euthanasia) or movement of an animal may be required
  - any cost limitations

- what situations must the trainer report to the owner, for example in the event of an illness, injury or behavioural issue requiring treatment concerning the trainer
- rights and obligations of the trainer and the owner
- any specific requests such as seeking two greyhounds be housed together
- responsibility for costs associated with things such as transport, veterinary care, feeding and other professional services
- how the two parties will communicate
- how the agreement can be terminated.

Some public trainers have found themselves in a situation where the owner stops paying the agreed training fee and stops answering phone calls or emails. The trainer is then left with a greyhound that is costing them money to feed and house and which may no longer be fit to race, but which the trainer is not legally entitled to sell or retire because they do not own the dog. Consider putting a condition into every training agreement which will deal with this situation.



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