

FACT SHEET

Prevention measures for serious injuries in racing





The Commission encourages all owners, breeders and trainers to implement measures at all stages of a greyhound's life to reduce the likelihood of bone fractures occurring.

Preventing serious injuries in racing greyhounds requires this whole-of-life approach - from breeding and rearing through to training and racing.

PREVENTION MEASURES

Greyhounds love to run and are the fastest dog breed on the planet - they are able to reach speeds in excess of 65 kilometres per hour.

Racing greyhounds are elite athletes and just like athletes in human sports, injuries can sometimes occur.

The most serious racing injuries typically involve bone fractures, often involving the limbs.

But by implementing evidence-informed strategies, we can help ensure the health, safety, and longevity of our greyhound athletes.

BREEDING: BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS

- Consider selected sires and dams with racing longevity (e.g. a minimum of 50 starts).
- Consider avoiding sires and dams with a serious injury (fracture) history.
- Ensure breeding dams are provided with the best possible nutrition to ensure optimal health, especially when pregnant and lactating.
- Breeding dams should be fed a high-quality puppy kibble as the primary component of their diet from the start of pregnancy (e.g. insemination, mating), to ensure the healthy growth and development of their puppies.



REARING: SUPPORTING HEALTHY GROWTH

- Nursing dams and puppies (until at least 14-15 months when skeleton maturity is reached) should be fed high-quality puppy kibble as the majority of their diet.
- Avoid feeding 'fillers' such as cereals or bread, which have low nutritional value to growing greyhounds.
- Limit excessive meat in the diet of growing greyhounds as this may lead to a calcium and phosphorus imbalance, which can be detrimental to bone development.
- Ensure puppies and young greyhounds have plenty of space to run and play to ensure their bones and soft tissues develop and build strength.



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TRAINING: CONDITIONING FOR RESILIENCE

- Introduce exercise gradually to allow bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons to remodel and adjust to slowly increasing athletic workloads.
- Rest and recovery periods are important in training programs to allow recovery of muscles and bones.
- Ensure greyhounds are checked regularly by a qualified individual, such as a veterinarian.
 Weekly checks are recommended.

RACING: MINIMISING RISK ON THE TRACK

- Ensuring that greyhounds have trialled at a track and are familiar with its turns prior to racing can help prevent accidents.
- A warm-up period of 5-10 minutes prior to exercise improves the blood supply and flexibility of muscles and joints
- Changes in racing pattern or performance (e.g. slowing on turns, running wide, unexplained reversal of form) should be investigated thoroughly as it may indicate an underlying injury.

- Even if no injury is detected, trainers should consider giving greyhounds not performing at their best a short spell to allow any undetected injuries to heal.
- Ensure greyhounds returning to racing following an injury or spell have a gradual reintroduction to fitness and training workloads. Serious injuries are more likely to occur following time off from racing.

NUTRITION: FUEL FOR BONE HEALTH

- It is recommended to provide a high-quality dry kibble as the majority of your greyhound's diet when racing.
- Commercial kibble diets for active dogs are balanced with the correct amount of protein, fat, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins to ensure good health.
- If feeding meat as a protein source, always provide a good quality calcium, phosphorus and vitamin D supplement.

Greyhounds racing on circular tracks in Australia run in a counter-clockwise direction, placing additional forces on the right hind limb and in particular, the right hock (tarsus).

It is important for trainers to regularly assess their greyhounds for the presence of hock pain.

Strapping of the hocks may also be beneficial to provide additional support when training and racing.



NOT SURE? Speak to your GWIC on-track veterinarian for guidance.

