

Dog-gone allegations over ballot question



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Grey2kUSA is confident the ballot initiative banning greyhound racing in Massachusetts will pass after three tries. But not if the dog parks have anything to say about it.

The group is part of the Committee to Protect Dogs, which include the MSPCA and the Humane Society of the United States. In their September 2007 report, they allege that greyhounds are repeatedly injured while competing, fed meat not suitable for human consumption, and caged 20 hours a day.

Raynham Park General Manager Gary Temple denied the charges and says he would never condone mistreatment of the dogs.

On average the dogs are caged 8-10 hours a day and sometimes 12-14 hours, depending on the dog. But they are also let out five times a day to run and train, Temple said.

Temple says the number of dogs euthanized is very small - "one-tenth of one percent" - and said they would be put down if they had a disease or were seriously injured.

MSPCA Advocacy director Kara Holmquist is very optimistic the ballot question will pass in November.

"Over the past several years, the public has been aware of the confinement and the significant injuries dogs incur while racing," Holmquist says. "We would welcome any challenges to the claims we make."

Holmquist said 79,000 signatures have been gathered, exceeding the minimum. A second round of 11,000 signatures will be gathered in May or June.

"We beat them before. If we have to get ads for the truth to counteract their untruths, we'll do it," Temple said. "We're very optimistic."

Greyhound owner shares her story

For one resident, the ballot initiative hits close to home. Pauline Bilsky owns two adopted greyhounds, 11-year-old Gus and 7-year-old Jack. Gus was adopted from a Connecticut track and Jack was from a New Hampshire track, she said.

Bilsky says when Gus was adopted, he had a spotted coat from low-quality food. He was nervous around other dogs because he had never seen a dog other than a greyhound.

"I've always supported the ban on greyhound racing," Bilsky says. "Most owners don't treat their dogs properly. When the dogs don't make enough money they dispose of them."

She says there are misconceptions about greyhounds being adopted.

"They adjust very rapidly to the improved lifestyle," Bilsky says. "They have a sweet temperament and make wonderful pets."

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