



FACT SHEET

CRUEL & INHUMANE: GREYHOUND RACING IN FLORIDA

GREYHOUNDS ARE KILLED WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER PROFITABLE

There is direct evidence that large numbers of unprofitable greyhounds are killed each year in Florida. In May 2002, an Alabama man admitted killing as many as 3,000 racing greyhounds over several years by shooting them in the head for a \$10 fee. The racers, who were sent to his farm to be killed, came from racetracks across Florida.ⁱ According to one state investigator, greyhound owners sent their dogs to Rhodes because the \$10 per animal fee was about half the cost of what a veterinarian would charge to euthanize the dogs.ⁱⁱ

The racing industry may have turned to individuals like Rhodes after receiving unwelcome publicity about the role of shelters in euthanizing unwanted greyhounds. As recently as 1996, one Florida shelter was responsible for euthanizing 600-800 racing greyhounds annually.ⁱⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, because the Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering does not keep records of the ultimate fate of greyhounds who race in the Sunshine state, the exact number of greyhounds killed each year at Florida dog tracks is still unknown.^{iv}

GREYHOUNDS ARE SERIOUSLY INJURED WHILE RACING

Racing greyhounds are often injured while competing. While most racing injuries are bone fractures and soft tissue injuries, greyhounds also suffer spinal injuries, seizures, and death from cardiac arrest.

Because the Division of Pari-Mutuel wagering does not keep records of greyhounds who are injured while competing, it is not known how many are injured each year at Florida racetracks.^v However, based on injury rates from other states, it is likely that the total number of greyhounds injured in Florida while competing exceeds 1,000 dogs each year.^{vi}

Specific injuries reported by the media provide a glimpse of this problem:

- Two greyhounds were seriously injured at the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track on the same day in November 2003. According to eyewitnesses, neither dog received immediate care because no veterinarian was on duty, a violation of state law. One of the dogs ran into the rail and tore his leg off at the elbow, while the other broke her leg in the following race.^{vii}
- In July 2003, a 3-year old greyhound named Leta's Princess was euthanized in front of 1,500 spectators after being hit by the track's mechanical lure at the Palm Beach Kennel Club.^{viii}
- In February 2001, a greyhound was euthanized at the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track after breaking a front leg while catching the mechanical lure.^{ix}
- In February 2000, a 4-year old greyhound named Tune Me In was euthanized after being seriously injured during a race at the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track. After being disoriented due to a collision with another racer, Tune Me In sprinted headlong into the lure.^x

GREYHOUNDS TEST POSITIVE FOR COCAINE AT FLORIDA DOG TRACKS

Between 2000 and 2003, 119 greyhounds tested positive for cocaine at Florida dog tracks.^{xi} Because the state does not investigate how racing dogs ingest the drug, it is not known whether drugs were administered to these dogs in an attempt to alter the outcome of races. However, according to a regulatory agency in the United Kingdom, even small amounts of a drug such as cocaine may affect a greyhound's performance.^{xii}

GREYHOUNDS LIVE IN CRUEL DAILY CONDITIONS, AND THEIR WELFARE IS COMPROMISED BY ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Racing greyhounds are short-term investments. As with all investments, making a profit depends on securing the highest possible return while incurring the least amount of cost. The health and welfare of racing greyhounds is often compromised by the fact that dog racing is a profit-driven industry.

- While at the racetrack, greyhounds are routinely caged for up to 22 hours each day.
- Racing greyhounds are routinely fed raw "4-D" meat that has been rejected by the USDA for human consumption. As a result of eating this meat, which is derived from dying, diseased, disabled and dead animals, greyhounds are continually exposed to serious *Salmonella* and pathogenic *e.coli*.^{xiii} According to an industry handbook, this meat is used because "it is the most economically feasible at this time."^{xiv}
- There is anecdotal evidence that racing greyhounds suffer high infestations of fleas, ticks and other parasites.
- In recent years, racing greyhounds have been susceptible to several industry-wide outbreaks of a mystery illness. In 2004, at least eighteen dogs died in Florida.^{xv} According to researchers at the University of Florida, the deaths of some of these dogs represent the first-ever documented cases of equine influenza jumping species.^{xvi}
- Racing greyhounds compete on the hottest days of summer and the coldest days of winter. Due in part to their proportionally larger muscle mass, greyhounds are more susceptible than other breeds to heat-related illnesses.^{xvii} Three greyhounds died from heat exhaustion after participating in schooling races at Daytona Beach in May 2003.^{xviii}

Economic considerations sometimes lead to serious cases of abandonment and neglect. In 2000, two men were found guilty of 70 charges of animal cruelty and abandonment after they neglected racing greyhounds in their care. When they were discovered, nearly 20 of the dogs were emaciated and heavily infested with ticks and fleas.^{xix}

GREYHOUNDS ARE TRANSPORTED BETWEEN FLORIDA RACETRACKS IN A DANGEROUS MANNER

Because greyhounds typically race at several racetracks during their racing career, professional haulers often transport large numbers of dogs from one racetrack to another. Greyhounds are usually shipped in cramped conditions, and in some cases undergo long cross-country trips in unventilated aluminum trailers or rental vans. In recent years, there have been several media-documented cases of greyhounds

dying in Florida during transit.

- Four greyhounds died in April 2003 after the trailer they were traveling in caught fire.^{xx}
- In August 2002, one greyhound died of heat stroke while being transported from a Miami dog track to the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track.^{xxi}
- In April 2000, six greyhounds died while being transported to the Sanford-Orlando Kennel Club from an Oregon dog track. The dogs, who were transported in an aluminum trailer and Ryder rental van, were not provided with food or water during the 58-hour trip.^{xxii}

FLORIDA GREYHOUND TRAINERS HAVE BEEN CAUGHT TRYING TO COVER UP ANIMAL NEGLECT

In September 2000, a greyhound trainer at the Palm Beach Kennel Club admitted attempting to hide the death by dehydration of three greyhounds in his care by secretly burying their bodies on racetrack property. The dogs' tattooed ears were cut off to prevent identification.^{xxiii}

ONE FLORIDA DOG TRACK HAS REPEATEDLY FAILED TO PROVIDE VETERINARY CARE FOR GREYHOUNDS WHO RACE AT THE FACILITY

According to the Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering, the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track failed to have a veterinarian on duty 15 separate times between June 2002 and October 2003.^{xxiv} The track's General Manager later argued that he was unable to ensure the presence of a veterinarian during races, as required by state law, because of a shortage of available animal doctors. However, approximately 150 veterinarians and veterinary hospitals are listed in the local phone book, and a 2001 state investigation indicated that three veterinarians had stopped working at the racetrack because the pay was too low.^{xxv}

FLORIDA DOG TRACKS RECEIVE NUMEROUS TAX CUTS, SUBSIDIES AND OTHER SPECIAL FAVORS, AND ARE HEAVY CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTORS

In recent years, the Florida legislature has passed numerous measures aimed at providing the struggling greyhound racing industry with legislative assistance. These measures included:

- The legalization of simulcast wagering, including authorization to simulcast all thoroughbred horse races.^{xxvi}
- Multiple reductions in the pari-mutuel tax rate. Between 1991 and 2002, this tax rate was reduced by a staggering 61%, from 7.33% to 2.83%.^{xxvii} For example, in 2000, Florida dog tracks were given an annual \$14 million tax cut.^{xxviii} In 1996, the legislature gave the dog racing industry an annual \$12.9 million tax cut.^{xxix}
- In 2003, the legislature approved high-stakes poker at pari-mutuel dog tracks, with a percentage of all wagers set aside to directly subsidize greyhound races.^{xxx}
- Dog food for the greyhound racing industry is exempt from state sales taxes.^{xxxi}

Dog track owners are also some of the largest campaign contributors in the state. Over the past four election cycles, dog and horse racing interests have given more than \$6.2 million in campaign contributions to state legislative candidates and political parties.^{xxxii}

GREYHOUND RACING IN FLORIDA IS A DYING INDUSTRY

Between 1988 and 2002, wagering on greyhound races in Florida dropped by 41%.^{xxxiii} During this same period, wagering declined for fifteen consecutive years. Attendance at Florida dog tracks declined by 71% between 1989 and 1998.^{xxxiv} More recent attendance figures are not available.

A report by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability released in October 2003 indicated that the Florida pari-mutuel industry is no longer generating enough state revenue to cover the cost of regulation and other statutory obligations.^{xxxv}

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^{xxv} Lawyer Representing Manager of Greyhound Track Responds to State Allegations, *Naples Daily News*/Janine Zeitlin, March 27, 2004

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