



# FACT SHEET

## HISTORY OF GREYHOUND RACING IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

### OVERVIEW

Greyhound racing in New Hampshire began in 1972, when the Hinsdale Raceway on the Vermont border added a dog track to its existing harness-racing facility. The following year the Seabrook Greyhound Park, located on the coast near the Massachusetts line, opened as a track devoted exclusively to dog racing. A third track, Berenson's Belmont Greyhound Track (now the Lakes Region Greyhound Park) opened in 1975. All three have live greyhound racing and all three offer simulcasting (video viewing and wagering on racing from greyhound and horse tracks nationwide.)

Seabrook, located on the shore just north of the Massachusetts line, is the largest of the three tracks. It is a class A track, meaning it is among the tracks offering the strongest competition and highest purses. It has year-round racing. Seabrook was founded and continues to be operated by members of the Carney family, who have been heavily involved for many years in both horse and dog racing in Florida and New England. The president of its operating company, Edward J. Keelan, is the former manager of the Raynham-Taunton Greyhound Park in Massachusetts.

Hinsdale is a smaller track in the western part of the state. Originally it was a harness-racing facility, but in 1972 the owners installed a heated greyhound track, allowing them to stage live greyhound racing in the colder months while they continued harness racing in the summer. Harness racing ceased altogether in 1985, and year-round greyhound racing became the sole attraction.

Lakes Region Greyhound Park, near Laconia, began as Berenson's Belmont Greyhound Track. The most marginal of the state's three dog tracks, Berenson's was sold in 1991 to Allan Hart and two partners, who changed the name to Lakes Region. A year earlier the Legislature had decided to allow simulcasting at the tracks for the first time, provided the tracks continued to hold live races. Today simulcasting wagering provides the largest portion of the tracks' total income. Live racing at Lakes Region is held only from mid-June through Labor Day.

New Hampshire currently conducts a total of 11,300 live greyhound races a year.

### HUMANE ISSUES

- **August 1991**

Laconia doghandler Costas Galionis is convicted of cruelty to animals after five greyhounds confined in the cabin of his pickup truck on a blistering hot day die of heatstroke.<sup>i</sup>

- **October 1991**

Alerted by complaints from several sources, Chuck Laurent of the New Hampshire Humane Society visits kennels at Berenson's Belmont Greyhound Track and finds at least 20 greyhounds in one kennel suffering from severe tick infestation. He informs the state veterinarian.<sup>ii</sup>

The annual "October Massacre" at Berenson's Belmont, when hundreds of unwanted greyhounds are put down at the end of the racing season, takes place as usual. Adoption groups say that more dogs have been saved this year, but no one knows how many were killed.<sup>iii</sup>

- **November 1991**

L. Stanley Berenson, owner of Berenson's Belmont Greyhound Track, sells the track to former general manager Allan Hart and two partners. The name is changed to Lakes Region Greyhound Track.<sup>iv</sup>

- **Summer 1992**

Greyhound kennels across the nation are hit by a respiratory disease which if untreated progresses to a lethal pneumonia. New England tracks are hit first and quarantined, but dogs shipped south before the quarantine infect greyhounds in Florida. Kennels in Arizona, West Virginia, Kansas and Alabama are also infected. At Seabrook 350 dogs are ill and 3 die. Half the dogs at Lakes Region are stricken, but Lakes Region is slow to report the problem. The state veterinarian says, "I don't know if they didn't want to call me or didn't want to tell me the truth. I don't know if anyone lied to me." A trainer reports hearing the track's racing secretary say, "We don't want the public to know."<sup>v</sup>

- **November 1992**

Lakes Region trainer Shawn Beauchesne is suspended for a year and fined \$200 for taping a dog's mouth shut for five hours because it was whining. The dog subsequently raced, shattered its foot and had to be euthanized. Beauchesne indignantly denies that he taped the dog: "I got stiffed," he says.<sup>vi</sup>

- **July 1993**

Dr. Clifford W. McGinnis, state veterinarian, says he is "comfortable that the greyhounds are receiving proper care at New Hampshire's three tracks," in spite of receiving frequent complaints from concerned citizens and animal rights groups about substandard kennel conditions, cruel treatment, and dogs killed because they fail to win or are sick, injured or old. In a tacit admission that dogs are being killed, he says "there are simply too many greyhounds and not enough homes for them."<sup>vii</sup>

- **August 1993**

A persistent group of demonstrators has been holding vigils outside the Hinsdale Greyhound Park all summer. On August 14 they stage a mock funeral for all the dogs that have been killed since Hinsdale opened its greyhound track. David Calef, PR director for the track, defends the track's efforts to place adoptable dogs; but in a rare moment of candor he admits that 200 greyhounds were destroyed at Hinsdale in 1992 and that in previous years dogs have been sent to laboratories to be used for medical research.<sup>viii</sup>

- **December 1995**

Eight greyhounds are rescued in Sainte-Sophie, Quebec by Louise Coleman of Massachusetts-based Greyhound Friends and Canadian activist Linda Miranda, with the help of the local police. Emaciated, dehydrated and shivering two to a cage in an unheated shack, the dogs are former racers from the Lakes Region Greyhound Track. They have been given or sold (accounts differ) to a Canadian dog breeder, Richard Valiquette, who intended to crossbreed them with huskies to create a faster racing sled dog. He admits he has been crossbreeding greyhounds and huskies for several years, even though the majority of the puppies die. Because the trainer transferred the dogs without the consent of their owners, Coleman files a civil suit and is eventually

able to obtain their release. All the greyhounds, including one crossbred puppy, are placed in adoptive homes.<sup>ix</sup>

- **Sept. 1996**

Two town wells in Seabrook are permanently closed because of e. coli contamination. The cause is not officially known, but the resulting publicity reveals that from the early 1970s the site, adjacent to a swamp, was a burial ground for surplus greyhounds from the track. Resident Blanche Bragg says that the town pound was paid by the track to dispose of up to 1,000 dead dogs. Water Superintendent Warner Knowles doubts the number was that high but recalls exhuming 35 dog carcasses in the 1970s and reburying them in a drier area.<sup>x</sup>

- **May 1999**

Beginning in Florida and rapidly spreading, a lethal combination of kennel cough and associated streptococcal toxic shock sweeps through greyhound kennels nationwide. Live racing is suspended in New Hampshire and across the country. At least 13 dogs die at Seabrook.<sup>xi</sup>

- **October 1999**

Following the end of seasonal racing at the Lakes Region track, a truck transporting 8 greyhounds south overturns in Georgia on October 30. The driver had fallen asleep at the wheel. The dogs, confined in cages in a trailer, were unhurt and were released to greyhound rescue organizations.<sup>xii</sup>

- **September 2002**

Greyhound Sav's Wilson Lee ("Willie") collapses after racing at Hinsdale and dies shortly afterwards. An autopsy performed by Dr. Jill Hopfenbeck reveals that Willie was anemic and had multiple fibrous growths, two collapsed lungs and massive internal bleeding that had been ongoing for at least seven weeks. Hopfenbeck files a complaint against the track veterinarian, Dr. Carl Nelson, for allowing Willie to race despite obvious symptoms of severe and prolonged illness.<sup>xiii</sup>

- **February 2003**

FOX News airs an investigation by TV reporter Mike Beaudet into allegations that large numbers of healthy greyhounds have been killed and buried at Hinsdale Greyhound Park. GREY2K USA board member Dr. Jill Hopfenbeck is featured on the program and displays skeletal remains of greyhounds found on the site. Visibly distressed, former Hinsdale trainer Wayne Paquette describes having seen adoptable dogs being killed: "They would take these dogs out of the truck, and their tails are wagging, they're so happy because they think they're going to the races, and they just walk them right into the shed, put them right to sleep, pull their muzzles off, collars off, and just pile them in a bucket, just like trash." Hopfenbeck says she believes thousands of greyhounds may have been buried at the track over the years. The Hinsdale operations manager admits that some dogs have been killed, claiming they were "sick, injured (or) overly aggressive." He refuses to reveal records of the disposition of retired dogs. Eventually he does disclose that 68 greyhounds were killed in 2002.<sup>xiv</sup>

## **LAWS AND REGULATIONS: BAILING OUT A DYING INDUSTRY**

Lacking many other sources of revenue, the New Hampshire Legislature has repeatedly tried to prop up the racing industry, which even in decline provides some tax income. The amount has gone steadily down: In 1975 the four racetracks (including the thoroughbred track) yielded \$16 million in state revenue, but by 1995 the figure was down to only \$5 million and still falling. According to *Greyhound Network News*, state revenues from dog racing in New Hampshire fell by 84% from 1990-1998. Attendance at live greyhound racing has

continued to plummet, and only simulcasting (video viewing and betting on races broadcast from tracks nationwide) has kept the dog tracks alive in New Hampshire.

Permission to begin simulcasting was granted by the Legislature in 1990, with the condition that the tracks continue to offer live races. Today, when the income from simulcasting dwarfs the income from live racing, a reasonable person might conclude that the tracks would be better off with no live racing at all. A bill to that effect -- that is, to end live greyhound racing while allowing simulcasting to continue -- was sponsored by Senators Katie Wheeler and Sheila Roberge in 2000. When it became clear that the bill would not pass, the sponsors amended it to discontinue the state's practice of using nearly \$350,000 in Sweepstakes money annually to augment racetrack purses. The amended bill was defeated.

Simulcasting and Sweepstakes money are both financial aids the Legislature and the Pari-Mutuel Commission have granted the industry over the years. Others have included allowing rebates on wagers (banned in 1996, reinstated in 1998; in practice, offered only at Lakes Region); a decrease in the tax the tracks pay on simulcasting (1995, 1996); and a \$2 million annual tax break (1997).

But what the industry and its allies really want is more gambling at the tracks. Since the mid-90s track owners have asked repeatedly for video gaming machines to be added to the existing mix of simulcasting and live racing. In 2002 several bills to expand gambling, including one that would have allowed video gaming machines at the tracks, were defeated separately in both houses. In 2003 another video gaming bill was introduced in the Senate, but it died in committee.

Throughout the history of greyhound racing in New Hampshire, the fate of the dogs at the track -- how many are injured, how many killed -- has been a closely-guarded secret. Some other states, recently including Massachusetts, have passed recordkeeping laws that oblige the tracks to make those figures available to the public. In February 2003 Rep. Paul LaFlamme introduced a similar bill in the New Hampshire House. Vigorously opposed by the industry and its allies, the bill has been "retained" in committee for later debate.

## **LEGISLATIVE/REGULATORY HIGHLIGHTS, 1990-2003**

- **1990**

The Legislature grants permission for the three greyhound tracks and one horse track to begin offering simulcasting (video viewing and betting on races nationwide), provided the tracks continue to offer live racing. Simulcasting begins at all 4 tracks in 1991.

- **April 1993**

The New Hampshire Pari-Mutuel Commission reports that state revenue from greyhound racing amounted to \$4.1 million (mostly from simulcasting) in 1992, having fallen from a high of \$8.8 million in 1977.<sup>xv</sup>

- **January 1995**

State revenue from Lakes Region increased slightly in 1994, but revenues from Seabrook and Hinsdale fell \$669,000 and \$40,000 respectively. Simulcasting now brings in more money than live racing. The deputy director of the Pari-mutuel Commission warns that the racing industry is in "guarded shape." The industry pleads for permission to begin video gambling at the tracks.<sup>xvi</sup>

- **August 1995**

Simulcasting keeps the the Lakes Region Greyhound Park going, but live racing is in big trouble. Wagering on live races has plunged 45 percent in the past year. Manager Richard Hart says the

decline is "staggering." A clause in the law allowing simulcasting obliges the track to run at least 100 live races a year despite the negative business impact. In response to Hart's complaints the Legislature lowers the tax Lakes Region must pay on its simulcasting. Both the Legislature and the Governor remain opposed to video gambling.<sup>xvii</sup>

- **October 1995**

The state's live-racing tracks would be "DOA" without simulcasting, according to the director of the state's Pari-Mutuel Commission. Supporters of racing in the Legislature reiterate that only simulcasting is keeping the tracks alive. Track owners continue to pressure the Legislature to allow them to add video gambling machines to the mix.<sup>xviii</sup>

- **May 1996**

Revisiting the simulcasting-tax break granted to the Lakes Region track in 1995, the Legislature grants a reduction of the tax to all three greyhound tracks. In practical terms, this means the Lakes Region's tax will increase while Seabrook and Hinsdale pay less. "This puts everyone at the same level," says a senator from the Hinsdale district, but it is a blow to the always-struggling Lakes Region track.<sup>xix</sup>

- **Spring 1997**

The Legislature approves a \$2 million dollar tax break for the racing industry (including the horse track).<sup>xx</sup>

- **August 1997-January 1998**

In August 1996 the Pari-Mutuel Commission banned rebates -- the practice of adding a bonus to the money won by big bettors on condition they spend it on more wagers. Lakes Region is the only New Hampshire track that offered rebates, and owner Al Hart complains that the ban has cost the track and the state \$250,000 each in revenue. In response, the Commission temporarily reinstates rebating in August 1997, with a cap of up to five percent. In January 1998 they make the reinstatement permanent.<sup>xxi</sup>

- **December 1997**

The New Hampshire Pari-Mutuel Commission reports that state revenue from horse and dog racing is down 16 percent from the previous year. Following a now-established pattern, most of the racing revenue has come from simulcasting rather than live racing: Of the \$4 million in state revenue from the four racetracks, only 24 percent was generated by live racing.<sup>xxii</sup>

- **May 1999**

The House votes to kill a proposal to legalize video gambling machines at the tracks and imposes an "indefinite postponement," meaning the issue cannot be resurrected in this session or the next.<sup>xxiii</sup>

- **February-March 2000**

A Senate bill is introduced, co-sponsored by Sen. Katie Wheeler of Durham and Sen. Sheila Roberge of Bedford, that would end live greyhound racing while allowing simulcasting to continue at the state's tracks. When it is clear that the bill has no chance of passing, sponsors amend it to prohibit the Sweepstakes Commission from using nearly \$350,000 annually in Sweepstakes revenue to augment racetrack purses. The amended bill is defeated.<sup>xxiv</sup>

- **February 2002**

Several bills to expand gambling, including one that would permit video gambling machines at the tracks, are defeated separately in the House and the Senate.<sup>xxv</sup>

- **February 2003**

The fate of racing dogs has long been hidden from the public. GREY2K USA has introduced HB 520, sponsored by Rep. Paul LaFlamme, that would open the window on racing's dirty secrets. The bill would require tracks to keep records of greyhound injuries and the disposition of all retired dogs, and to make those records available to the public. Vigorously opposed by the industry and its allies, the bill is "retained" in committee, to be debated later in the year.<sup>xxvi</sup>

- **May 2003**

Senate Bill 117, which would allow 900 video gambling machines at the three greyhound tracks, is recommitted in the Senate. That means it can be brought back for reconsideration in this session or the next. In an effort to win more senators to their side, the bill's sponsors add a pharmacy benefit for seniors and other sweeteners to the language; nevertheless it dies in committee.<sup>xxvii</sup>

A curious note about regulations: Horse and dog racing are regulated by the New Hampshire Pari-Mutuel Commission, which writes the rules and has power to enforce them. Because of a change in the lifespan of Administrative Rules, the Rules of Greyhound Racing that became effective in 1992 expired in 1998. New rules were not adopted until January 13, 2002. In effect, the racing industry operated without officially adopted regulations for over 4 years.

10/27/03

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<sup>i</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Martin Basch, August 16, 1991

<sup>ii</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Roger Amsden, October 10, 1991

<sup>iii</sup> *Boston Globe*/Larry Tye, November 9, 1992

<sup>iv</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Roger Amsden, November 23, 1991

<sup>v</sup> *Greyhound Network News*, Fall/Winter 1992; *Boston Globe*/Larry Tye, November 9, 1992

<sup>vi</sup> *Boston Globe*/Larry Tye, November 9, 1992

<sup>vii</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Al Nettel, July 27, 1993

<sup>viii</sup> *Greyhound Network News*, Fall 1993

<sup>ix</sup> *Montreal Gazette*/Aaron Derfel, December 20, 1995; *Concord Monitor*/Ann marie Timmons, January 11, 1996; *Greyhound Network News*, Spring 1996

<sup>x</sup> *Hampton Union*/Susan Morse, Sept 13, 1996

<sup>xi</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News*, April 30, 1999

<sup>xii</sup> *Greyhound Network News*, Winter 1999-2000

<sup>xiii</sup> GREY2K USA

<sup>xiv</sup> FOX News, February 3, 2003

<sup>xv</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Donn Tibbetts, April 27, 1993

<sup>xvi</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Donn Tibbetts, Jan. 13, 1995; *Greyhound Network News*, Spring 1995

<sup>xvii</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Roger Talbot, August 27, 1995; *Greyhound Network News*, Fall 1995

<sup>xviii</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Donn Tibbetts, October 11, 1995

<sup>xix</sup> *Greyhound Network News*, Summer 1996

<sup>xx</sup> *Greyhound Network News*, Fall 1997

<sup>xxi</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Roger Amsden, December 19, 1997; January 23, 1998

<sup>xxii</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Donn Tibbetts, December 31, 1997

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Keene Sentinel*, May 14, 1999

<sup>xxiv</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Warren Hastings, March 16, 2000; *Concord Monitor*/ Hilary Krieger, March 2000

<sup>xxv</sup> *Greyhound Network News*, Spring 2002

<sup>xxvi</sup> GREY2K USA

<sup>xxvii</sup> *Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News* /Joe Cox, May 15, 2003; GREY2K USA