

'10 dogs injured' at every Canidrome race meeting

Claim by group calling for Macau track to be shut, with many greyhounds 'retired' by lethal injection

Simon Parry

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Greyhounds are suffering potentially life-threatening injuries at the rate of more than 10 dogs every race day at Macau's Canidrome, according to animal welfare campaigners calling for the track to be shut down.

A report by Grey2K USA found that from October 21 to December 31 last year, 302 of the 655 imported racing dogs at the Canidrome suffered injuries.

That is equivalent to four animals a day or more than 10 for each of the track's three-times-a-week races.

About 40 per cent of injuries were cuts and tears, while 8 per cent involved fractured bones.

Of the 302 injured dogs, 54 were recommended for "retirement" - meaning death by lethal injection. Dogs are also retired when they fail to finish in the top three for two or three consecutive races.

Because the Canidrome will not release former racing dogs for adoption, all of them die.

A report detailing the extent of injuries suffered by greyhounds in Macau is being circulated by the welfare group as part of its campaign to halt imports of racing dogs from Australia and to close the Canidrome.

Campaigners say the injury statistics, collected from the Canidrome's own website, show how badly the dogs suffer during their short racing lives before being put down.

A global campaign was launched after a *South China Morning Post*

investigation last year found 383 greyhounds were euthanised at the Canidrome in 2010, most of them healthy dogs aged five to six years.

Carey Theil, executive director of Grey2K USA, said: "There are more than 600 greyhounds racing at the Canidrome and more than 90 per cent are four years old or younger.

"Greyhounds are injured on a daily basis, including suffering broken legs, sprains and cuts.

"Some are injured repeatedly until they simply disappear from the track's records. During a 10-week period, nearly half of the greyhounds at the track were reportedly injured." Theil's group is trying to make its point through saving one dog as an example of how it could help the retired racing greyhounds.

It has singled out Brooklyn, a three-year-old white, red and fawn dog. "Brooklyn is literally on death row, and unless we are able to help him he will eventually be killed," Theil said.

"We are hoping to rescue him and send him back to Australia for adoption, as a test case to see if all the Macau greyhounds can be helped. Humane advocates from all over the globe have contacted the Canidrome management, and asked them to make a change.

"If the track managers continue with these destructive policies, then the Macau government should intervene."

Commenting on the report, David Neale, animal welfare director at the Hong Kong-based Animals Asia Foundation, which also wants the Canidrome shut down, said the injury statistics were "quite incredible".

"The number of injuries these animals face is terrible, mainly because there are very few welfare guidelines at these tracks," he said.

"The dogs have become a commodity. They spend most of their time confined, apart from a little bit of exercise. Then, when their racing days end, there is nothing but a deadly injection waiting for them. It is a miserable life."

Neale said it was irresponsible of the Australian government to allow greyhounds to be exported to a territory without proper animal welfare regulation.

The Canidrome did not respond to repeated calls and e-mails for comment from the *Sunday Morning Post* and has so far not responded to any of the petitions or letters sent by international animal welfare groups.