



Animal rights groups protest opening weekend of greyhound races



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By Adam Cellini | [0 comments](#)

SARASOTA, Fla. -- Signs with phrases like "Enjoy the Abuse" and "Honk 4 Hounds" welcome drivers to the Sarasota Kennel Club in the first weekend of greyhound races.

Each honk protesters hear from passing cars is a small victory in their challenge against greyhound racing.

"Well it boosts the morale a little bit," says volunteer Tucker Northup. "It feels good knowing that people have put thought into it, or are putting thought into it right now."

For over 20 years, Carolyn Repeta has organized this rally outside the kennel club before its opening weekend.

"Over one million dogs have been exterminated for this blood sport, and its time to end," says the events coordinator for the local group Sarasota in Defense of Animals.

According to the organization Grey2k, 12 of the remaining 21 dog tracks in the country can be found in Florida.

They say eight of the 89 greyhounds euthanized in the state last year were regular racers in Sarasota.

"What happens to the greyhounds is cruel and inhumane, and it needs to be stopped," says Grey2K volunteer Kelly Driscoll. "We're working really hard to pass legislation all throughout the country to end that."

Director of racing Tom Bowersox disagrees, saying the kennel club's dogs live comfortably on site in clean facilities with spacious crates and a medical staff on duty at all times.

"I'm sure that probably 75 to 80 percent of them have never been in to a facility like ours, and they basically just go off the hearsay of what is told by different groups," says Bowersox.

Tallahassee has also taken up this issue.

This last session featured two bills on the subject of dog racing. One would have abolished existing law requiring facilities to run greyhounds in order to host other forms of gambling. The other would demand kennel clubs to report greyhound injuries instead of just deaths.

"We just want to educate people," says Driscoll. "Maybe when our bills do come on the ballot, they'll say 'hey I remember those people. I'm going to vote with them.'"

Bowersox says the track would still run greyhound racing if legislation were to pass in the future, but might lower the number of races it runs in its six-month season.