

## Dog illness at Tucson Greyhound Park under investigation

By Patty Machelor Arizona Daily Star Mar 2, 2016



Pima Animal Care Center

Photos from an inspection by Pima Animal Care officers at Tucson Greyhound Park, 2601 S. 3rd Ave., on Feb. 26, 2016.

Several dogs with life-threatening illnesses or serious injuries have been removed from Tucson Greyhound Park recently, and two have died — possibly of distemper.

Southern Arizona Greyhound Adoption has provided care for at least six dogs since Feb. 17, including the two that died as well as two now in critical condition from what is being reported by the adoption group as viral pneumonia. Another dog came in with a badly broken leg and another had twisted gut, a condition in which the animal's stomach dilates and then rotates or twists.

A necropsy is being performed on a dog that died Monday, said **Amanda Jacinto**, public information officer with the Arizona Department of Gaming. The other dog that died, on Feb. 18, was initially thought to be suffering from kidney failure, but then responded to treatment before dying the next day. That dog was cremated and so the cause of death remains unknown. However, Jacinto said it is now believed that dog also had a respiratory illness.

**Dale Popp**, the manager of the track at 2601 S. Third Ave., declined an interview request but did respond in an email about the two dogs that died.

"Unfortunately, although both greyhounds received all vaccinations, both greyhounds (litter mates) did expire from what supporting evidence shows to be distemper," he wrote. "Further testing is still ongoing."

The track veterinarians have put "preventive measures in place," he wrote, "to minimize the possibility of sickness to any of the other greyhounds." Popp referred additional questions back to the Gaming Department.

Jacinto said the state could not confirm if the deaths were from distemper, and provided a letter from the department about the dog illnesses and deaths.

"In the past two weeks, the Department has been made aware of four dogs in total leaving TGP for respiratory illnesses. It is important to note that is only one percent of the canine population at the track and does not create a need to address an outbreak at this time," the letter says. "However, as a precaution the track has self imposed a quarantine, that does not allow new dogs to enter the track."

It will take another week or two before the one necropsy is completed, she said.

Medical costs for the ill and injured dogs have topped \$10,000 so far, the greyhound adoption group reported online, and the two animals in isolation are costing the nonprofit about \$600 per day.

Tucson City Councilman **Steve Kozachik** asked last week to have an officer with the Pima County Animal Care Center inspect the kennels after hearing of the respiratory illnesses and then seeing a video — at trackinfo.com — of a dog that failed to run in a race Feb. 24 and instead could be seen flailing on its side in its starting box.

During the kennel inspections Friday, **Debra Tenkate**, enforcement supervisor with the Animal Care Center, said she did not see any signs of distemper or pneumonia.

“Distemper would have been easy to see,” she said, referring to symptoms such as reddened eyes, and a runny discharge from the nose and eyes. “I didn’t observe any dogs that were sick.”

There were 449 dogs living in the kennels during her inspection, county records show.

Kozachik said the track veterinarians and the Gaming Department should shut down track operations “at the very least until these health and injury concerns are addressed.” He is a longtime critic of the track.

During 2015, state records show at least six dogs died — either at the track or immediately following their departure — of ailments and injuries such as twisted gut, a broken back and tick fever.

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Contact Patty Machelor at 806-7754 or [pmachelor@tucson.com](mailto:pmachelor@tucson.com).



State bill could end racing at Tucson Greyhound Park