

Blayney Chronicle

Ten greyhounds a week are being killed or euthanised after racing on NSW tracks

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13 Mar 2016, 4:33 p.m.



Greyhound Racing New South Wales has commissioned research to design tracks to minimise injuries to the dogs. Photo: Wolter Peeters

Almost 10 greyhounds a week are being killed or so badly injured they have to be euthanised after racing on NSW tracks, according to several veterinarians.

One in two dogs that raced is expected to suffer an injury of some sort.

A study of the first injury data released by the industry regulator Greyhound Racing New South Wales (GRNSW) indicated up to one in eight dogs are likely to die or be subsequently euthanised as a result of injuries sustained on the racetrack.

Veterinarians reviewing the figures have commented that whilst the death and euthanasia rate was "shocking", so too is the unexpectedly high number of dogs being injured each week.

The figures are extrapolated from the first Preliminary Greyhound Racing Injury Report, which was been produced by GRNSW and have been presented in a submission to the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW, which is due to report at the end of the month.

"It is worse than anyone thought – when it is broken down to the individual risk," said one of the vets involved in writing the submission.

Paul Newson, the interim chief executive of GRNSW told Fairfax Media that he recognised the injury rates are "unacceptable".

"We are investing significant amounts of money into independent research for a safe track design to try and mitigate the injury rate," Mr Newson said.

He said the research project, which is expected to take approximately 12 months to complete, will aim to reduce and ultimately prevent injuries during greyhound training and racing by establishing an optimal model for track design and surface.

The revelations about the individual injury risk to the dogs comes 12 months after the live baiting scandal that erupted last year and forced the management and board of GRNSW to step down, while a special commission of inquiry into the industry was established.

The greyhound racing industry had been the subject of a parliamentary inquiry in 2013 after a series of stories by Fairfax Media revealed allegations of industry mismanagement and widespread mistreatment of dogs. That inquiry was criticised by Greens MP and one of the committee's own members, Dr John Kaye, for glossing over critical evidence on the mistreatment of dogs, the wastage of puppies and dogs no longer suitable to race, loopholes in drug testing and criticisms of the industry's governance.

The special commission, which has been running since last year, has heard evidence of live baiting, poor management and how greyhound racing stewards were told to "desist" from providing too much detailed information about injuries and deaths of the dogs, because the industry was being plagued by "pretty bad publicity".

The latest figures just released from GRNSW revealed that a year after the shakeup of the industry paid attendances at the tracks in 2014-2015 financial year was 126,674 and the number is expected to rise slightly in the 2015-2016 year.

Wagering turnover to the end of January 2016 is also up 3.4 per cent on the same period last year and the number of race meetings has remained steady with 1209 meetings planned. However, GRNSW said the number is scheduled to be reduced to 1100 for the next financial year as further rationalisations takes place.

Breeding restrictions on dogs introduced in July 2015, has seen the number of greyhounds born in NSW fall by 50 per cent in the past year. The number of dogs being raced has also been dropping on average each year from 2010 when there were 5028 dogs raced to 3162 in 2013, according to report last year by the Working Dog Alliance.

Mr Newson told Fairfax Media that given some of the evidence at the special commission there is "still more work to do" in reforming the industry and its management.

He said that they are undertaking a global search for a new chief steward and would be bringing on more stewards and compliance officers.

"We don't have enough eyes on the ground."

Mr Newson said the reforms had been undertaken at a "frenzied rate" and would continue including with plans for a more robust and independent auditing system that may emulate the models in Victoria or Queensland.

GRNSW is also pushing for a significant reduction in race clubs and reduced racing as part of its strategic direction. It believes that a reduced network of clubs and a reduction in the number of race meetings will enable greater investment and development of racing infrastructure.

It is also reviewing its existing codes of practice for breeding and training of Greyhounds and has invited external animal scientists, industry and animal welfare organisations to assist in the development of a new welfare code.

The story [Ten greyhounds a week are being killed or euthanised after racing on NSW tracks](http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/ten-greyhounds-a-week-are-being-killed-or-euthanised-after-racing-on-nsw-tracks-20160311-gng9xx.html) (<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/ten-greyhounds-a-week-are-being-killed-or-euthanised-after-racing-on-nsw-tracks-20160311-gng9xx.html>) first appeared on [The Sydney Morning Herald](http://www.smh.com.au/) (<http://www.smh.com.au/>).