

Call to ban export of greyhounds to Macau

Richard Willingham
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Greyhounds prepare to race in Macau, where they are put down if they don't run a place in five starts.

GREYHOUNDS exported to Macau are facing a "death sentence" and living in inhumane conditions but the government says it is not in control of animal welfare in other countries, despite placing strict conditions on livestock exported overseas.

Animals Australia has called on Greyhounds Australasia and the government to ban the trade to the Asian gambling hub because greyhounds are kept in tiny cages, denied regular exercise and killed if they fail to finish in the top three in five

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consecutive races.

The peak body has begun a review of the trade to Macau, but Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig said the government was only in control of ensuring dogs were fit and healthy to be exported.

The activist group, which uncovered horrific cruelty to Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs, said there were no laws in Macau to protect greyhounds from cruelty.

In 2010, 280 Australian dogs were exported to Macau. Campaign director Lyn White said the head of the Macau government's animal control department, Dr Choi U Fai, described the plight of greyhounds as "terrible" and that every dog imported from Australia was dead within three years.

"In 2010, 383 dogs were killed at the track, more than one per day and up from 322 a year before," Ms White said.

Greyhounds Australasia chief executive Craig Taberner said it was holding a formal review into its approach to exports, including development of a set of standards for countries importing Australian greyhounds. He expects the review to be before the board in the third quarter of 2012.

"We will engage with the Australian government on the potential for regulatory backing for a new set of export standards. This will aim to ensure that greyhounds cannot be exported to countries who do not meet relevant standards," Mr Taberner said.

Critics of the trade have inundated Senator Ludwig's office with complaints. Senator Ludwig wrote to Animals Australia outlining that the government is responsible for ensuring a dog is healthy before granting it an export permit.

"The government does not regulate or monitor the purpose or end use of the export," Senator Ludwig wrote.

This is in stark contrast to the new export rules for the live export industry that require exporters to have an independently audited supply chain, from farm to overseas slaughter, that meets a stringent set of animal welfare standards.

The Age understands that greyhound exports are treated differently by the department to livestock exports because they are considered companion or racing animals and are exported





A greyhound prepares to race in Macau.

better journalistic standards.

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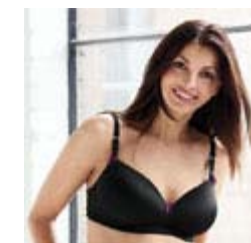
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A spokeswoman for Senator Ludwig said Australia supported the efforts of other countries to improve animal welfare.

Ms White said: "Exporting greyhounds to Macau is nothing more than a death sentence for these animals. It's an illogical double standard to put tight regulations in place for the export of native animals, but not for dogs or other animals exported from Australia."

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