



Greyhound live baiting: Many more arrests expected as Queensland inquiry report due

By Courtney Wilson

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The police taskforce investigating greyhound live baiting in Queensland has warned the industry it expects to make many more arrests.

The industry is nervously awaiting a report from the Queensland Government's commission of inquiry into the scandal, which is due on Monday.

Back in February, ABC's Four Corners program revealed the use of live baiting to train greyhounds in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

It sparked the launch of the Queensland's Greyhound Racing Inquiry taskforce, which has already made 25 arrests on 68 charges, with 46 of those relating to an offence of serious animal cruelty.

Detective Superintendent Mark Ainsworth said the enormity of the problem was still becoming apparent.

"Here we are three months into the creation of the taskforce and we really haven't left the Lockyer Valley area, and we have the whole state to do," he said.

"Queensland Greyhound Racing is run at eight registered greyhound racing tracks, from Cairns down to Coolangatta, so we have the whole state to look at.

"We did have the issue recently of 55 greyhound carcasses found at Bundaberg, which the taskforce had a look at, and that's part of an ongoing investigation with forensic experts and QPS.

"It is a huge task, we do have a mountain of work still to be investigated."

The fallout from the live-baiting scandal has already been significant, right across the country.

The racing board in New South Wales was sacked, while in Victoria they left voluntarily.

Disgraced trainers have also been forced to surrender their animals.

Just this week, high-profile hall of fame member Ron Ball became the 22nd greyhound trainer "warned off", or banned for life.

In April, the discovery of a mass grave near Bundaberg containing at least 55 dead dogs had animal welfare groups worried about what was still to come.

In a submission to the inquiry, Racing Queensland Chief Executive Darren Condon defended the organisation's past.



PHOTO: A live possum is used as bait as a part of a greyhound's race training regime.
(Supplied: Animals Australia)

MAP: QLD



PHOTO: Remains of a greyhound were found at a mass dumping site south of Bundaberg.
(ABC News: Kallee Buchanan)

"Notwithstanding some shortcomings ... Racing Queensland has responded to credible allegations of live baiting in a timely and professional manner," he said.

"The primary cause for Racing Queensland's lack of knowledge was that it was not informed of the extent of the practice of live baiting."

Up to a thousand greyhounds could be left homeless

There could be up to a thousand greyhounds in search of new homes by the time the inquiry is over, RSPCA Queensland CEO Mark Townend said.

"There'll be hundreds more greyhounds into the market, you might say, and between RSPCA and the good rescue groups out there we need to try and re-home as many as possible," he said.

"They make great pets, but there'll be maybe more than we can actually re-home.

"At the moment there's a couple of hundred animals in care, but there could be anywhere up to a thousand animals by the time this is over."

Mr Townend said ever since the Four Corners program aired there had been a large increase in calls to the RSPCA.

"Our call centre takes 300,000 calls a year and they've increased tremendously over the past few months after people saw that story and were totally distressed," he said.

"I don't think the average Queenslanders knew that it was happening."

'Ban greyhound racing in Queensland'

Greyhound racing should be banned throughout the state following recent revelations of live baiting, Animal Liberation Queensland president Chay Neal said.

"It's certainly shocked the public, but I think people in the industry and people in animal rights are not surprised, I think it's the best kept secret in the industry," he said.

"It is a huge challenge and I know that animals Australia has stepped up and tried to find a property in Tasmania and potentially Victoria, so that's one option that could be considered.

"We don't think the government has got any choice but to ban greyhound racing."