

Greyhound live baiting: Almost two thirds of ex-racers put down

June 2, 2015, Jorge Branco, Journalist, *Brisbane Times*

Shocking details about the number of racing greyhounds killed every year have emerged out of an inquiry into live baiting in the industry.

A commission of inquiry report handed down Monday revealed almost two thirds of greyhounds retired in 2014 were put to death.

More than 2000 greyhounds were born almost every year in Queensland but poor record-keeping made it hard to track what happened to most of them, the commission found.



The Queensland Government has moved to abolish all racing boards. *Photo: Joe Armao*

Euthanasia

The Alan MacSporran-led commission asked Racing Queensland to provide all the retirement forms for 2013 and 2014.

Only 1462 forms were lodged but the commission believes the actual number of dogs retired in those years was closer to 8500, leaving thousands of greyhounds unaccounted for.

The forms found after racing the "majority of ex-racing greyhounds are either euthanised, die as a result of accidents... or will simply go missing".

Until 2014, Racing Queensland's dog retirement form allowed trainers to tick a box indicating they had put down a dog for "lack of ability".

Year	Greyhounds euthanased	Accidents, deceased, no reason provided or missing	Greyhounds listed as exported, transferred interstate, used for breeding and those with unknown outcomes that die prematurely	Total estimated deaths post retirement	Average percentage
2014	59.5%	5.5%	7.8%	72.8%	76%
2013	74.4%	6.8%	6.5%	87.7%	
2012	65.3%	20.4%	0%	85.7%	
2011	64.3%	14.3%	0%	78.6%	
2010	76.5%	14.7%	5.6%	96.8%	

320. Given the lack of variation over the years in the percentage of greyhounds that die subsequent to racing (76%), it is also very likely that the high number of greyhounds that should have been registered as retired (approximately 7,000) also suffer the same fate.

"Wastage"

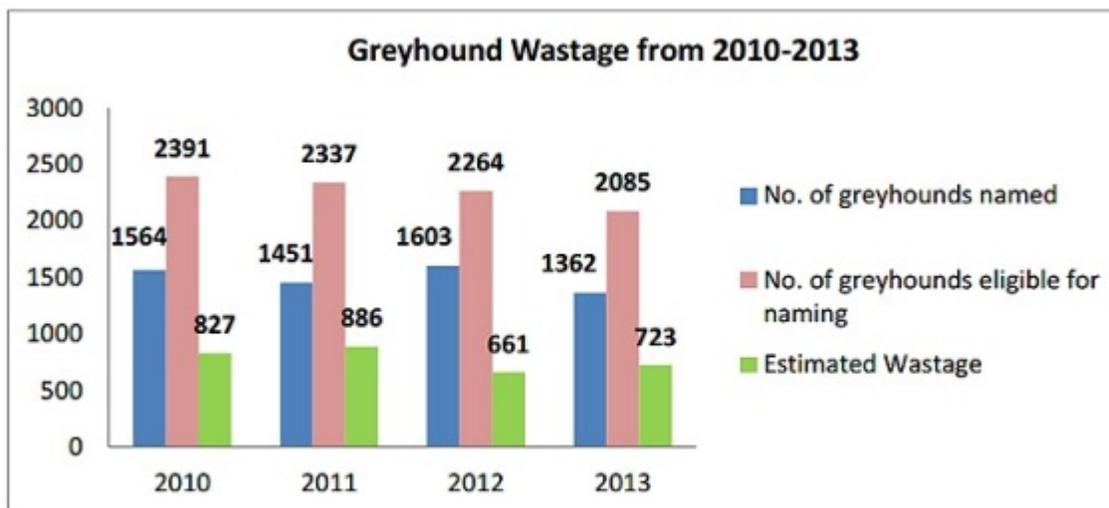
The commission's report slammed the industry for an "unacceptable level of wastage" before puppies even made it into the industry.

In the 11 years to 2013, the report found about 30 per cent of pups were never named, disappearing from the system before ever racing.

"Addressing the problem of overbreeding, increasing the capability of the GAP and ensuring that greyhound pups are socialised will go some way towards reducing the level of wastage in the industry," Mr MacSporran wrote.

"But it should be understood that reconciling the numbers of greyhounds bred for racing and the numbers which, for whatever reason, are or become unsuitable for that purpose, will always be problematic.

"The real question, is what, if any, level of wastage is acceptable for any modern society which has due regard for animal welfare."



Pups born

The level of deaths is fed into by the sheer number of greyhounds born every year, their long life expectancy and relatively short racing careers.

The Australian Veterinary Association told a New South Wales inquiry into greyhounds last year the "biggest problem with greyhound racing in Australia is that significantly more animals are born than will have a long, healthy career in racing leading to unacceptable wastage levels".

Even finding out how many dogs were born every year proved a challenge for the inquiry but it eventually arrived at a set of figures using average pups per litter and litter numbers from Greyhounds Australasia.

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	SA	Tas	Vic	Qld	WA	Australia
2013	0	6,735	0	624	504	6,319	2,230	630	17,042
2012	0	7,232	0	573	592	5,903	1,966	504	16,771
2011	0	8,039	0	561	548	6,262	2,205	573	18,188
2010	0	8,228	0	567	517	6,823	2,325	737	19,196
2009	0	8,222	0	699	466	6,395	2,350	693	18,824
2008	0	8,272	6	825	554	6,659	2,432	643	19,391
2007	0	8,417	38	750	655	7,699	2,243	668	20,469
2006	0	10,238	38	882	643	7,314	2,161	788	22,063
2005	0	9,702	6	813	636	8,026	2,098	706	21,987
2004	0	8,253	19	1,134	693	8,285	2,066	636	21,086
2003	0	8,316	19	857	542	7,768	2,155	561	20,217
11 yr total	0	91,652	126	8,285	6,350	77,452	24,230	7,138	215,233

⁹⁷ Submission 390, p. 2, as reported in the Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW, First Report, March 2014, p 99.

⁹⁸ The average of 6.3 pups per litter is based on figures reported in Submission No. 339, RSPCA Australia, 6 November 2013 submitted to the Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW.

Adoption numbers

The MacSporrان report was critical of Racing Queensland's Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP), saying while it was a "commendable initiative" it was "wholly inadequate" to deal with the amount of dogs it needed to.

"The current rate of overbreeding is such that the GAP takes only a fraction of the retired dogs," Mr MacSporrان wrote.

"Other organisations do their utmost to assist in re-homing retired dogs but again, the sheer numbers mean that there are a great number that cannot be accommodated."

The commission of of inquiry found most years the adoption family was only able to re-home less than 100 greyhounds.

NUMBER OF ADOPTIONS THROUGH THE GREYHOUND ADOPTION PROGRAM (QLD)



Note: RQ advises there may be some issues with the accuracy of the 2012-13 data.

Track deaths

The inquiry also ran into trouble with the statistics surrounding animals put down after race-day injuries.

It stressed the importance of these figures being available to the public but noted they had not previously been released.

Even with the figures eventually obtained, the report noted inaccuracies and inconsistencies because it was "standard practice" to report a dog injured in a race as "stood down for three months" rather than euthanased.

384. The Commission requested this information from RQ who provided the following statistics:-

Period	Number of Greyhounds Injured/examined	Race Starters	Number of Greyhounds euthanased at the track	Injuries to starters resulting in euthanasia	Number of injuries/greyhounds examined to starters
FY13	1905	38,751	53	0.137%	4.916%
FY14	2127	43,248	61	0.141%	4.918%
1/7/14 – 30/4/15	2379	34,558	52	0.150%	6.88%

Recommendations

Several of the commission's recommendations look to address these issues, including moves to scrap a breeding incentive program and a suite of measures to allow tracking of individual greyhounds from birth to death.