

# PALM BEACH KENNEL CLUB BANS TRAINER WHO LET GREYHOUND SUFFER AND DIE

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*photo by AngMoKio via Wikimedia Commons*

The Palm Beach Kennel Club has banned a greyhound trainer and his kennel assistant for life after one of their dogs suffered a critical injury during a race and was left to die, according to an investigative report filed by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

The dog, Where's Fly In, ran in the eighth afternoon race at the kennel club on July 13, 2014. As Where's Fly In entered the first turn, the dog collided with another greyhound, severely fracturing its leg. The injured greyhound was immediately taken off the track and rushed over to kennel club veterinarian, Dr. Daniel Neger, who discovered that the fracture ran from the greyhound's leg up to the animal's shoulder.

Neger injected the dog with a painkiller and told kennel assistant Loyce Metcalfe that Where's Fly In should be immediately taken to an emergency veterinarian clinic. Neger told investigators that Where's Fly In's injuries were repairable.

But Metcalfe and greyhound trainer Michael Marsella told investigators Neger said that there was no need to take Where's Fly In to the emergency clinic right away and that it could wait until the following morning. Neger denied saying this.

According to Neger's account, the doctor couldn't immobilize Where's Fly In's leg "due to the location of the injury." That's when Neger told Metcalfe that the injury was repairable if the dog were immediately taken to an emergency clinic.

But the greyhound was never taken to a clinic, nor given any medical treatment beyond a painkiller injection. Instead, the report says, Marsella and Metcalfe waited until the next day to seek medical attention for the injured animal.

Around 8:15 the following morning, Marsella carried Where's Fly In to a transport truck and drove to a West Palm Beach-based veterinarian for treatment. Upon arriving there, Marsella discovered that the clinic had not yet opened, so he decided to go back to the kennel club to train his greyhounds and left Where's Fly In inside the truck while he did so.

Marsella eventually took Where's Fly In back to the clinic later that morning, and when he opened the door to the transport truck, he found the dog was dead.

Marsella and Metcalfe were ultimately found to have failed to obtain medical treatment for Where's Fly In beyond the painkiller the dog was given, which is a violation of Florida statutes. Marsella himself is facing animal cruelty charges.

For its part, the Palm Beach Kennel Club took immediate action and sent Marsella and Metcalfe letters notifying them that the club was "permanently ejecting" them both. According to records, Marsella and Metcalfe's licenses expired in June of this year. An "enforcement alert" was placed on the licenses, preventing them from being renewed.

Grey2K USA, a nonprofit group that has been working diligently to get Florida legislators to pass what is called a "decoupling" initiative, which is a law that would have casinos give up dog racing at their facilities, say that while the story is heinous and tragic, it at least shows some progress when it comes to the mindset of the powers that be.

"The Palm Beach Kennel Club and the state deserve credit for handling this the right way," Carey Theil, executive director of Grey2K USA, tells *New Times*. "I'd like to think that this reflects them learning."

Theil says the group has seen several cases of neglect like this over the years, which has prompted the group to keep pushing for legislation to end dog racing.

"There's clearly a difference in the way this case was handled compared to similar cases in the past," Theil says.

Historically, the state has been slow in cracking down and punishing trainers and kennels over the years. Many cases have included neglect of animals, while other cases included greyhounds testing positive for cocaine.

In April 2014, a similar case to Where's Fly In was recored when a 2-year-old greyhound named Kelso's Caper fractured her left front leg during a night race. The veterinarian clinic was closed, and Kelso's Caper [was forced to suffer through the night before being euthanized](#) the next day.

One trainer at Mardi Gras Racetrack once [falsified vaccination papers for 94 of his greyhounds](#) by forging a dead veterinarian's signature on the documents. Another case displayed the bureaucratic entanglements of policing the greyhound industry when one Mardi Gras Casino trainer [went unpunished even after one of his dogs tested positive for cocaine](#).

But the Palm Beach Kennel Club and the Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office moved in quickly to hold Marsella and Metcalfe accountable for Where's Fly In's tragedy. On September 3, 2014, Assistant State Attorney Judith Arco agreed to file animal cruelty charges against Marsella based on the kennel's report.

A trial for Marsella was scheduled for August 4 of this year but was canceled after Marsella agreed to enter into a plea deal on a misdemeanor charge of cruelty to animals. He is scheduled to be sentenced October 6.

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