Key facts...

★ The RSPCA is a member of the Greyhound Forum which engages with the greyhound industry to try and encourage improvements to animal welfare for racing greyhounds.
★ The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010 are due to be reviewed in 2015.
★ The RSPCA starts from the position that there are recognised issues that impact upon the welfare of greyhounds throughout their life.
★ These include breeding/importation, rearing, schooling, training, trialling, racing and retirement.
★ We therefore believe that it is essential that the Regulations protect them from any welfare issues that may impact at any stage throughout their lives - from cradle to grave.
★ We remain concerned that there is still a two-tier system of regulation between those tracks licensed by local authorities and those licensed by the GBGB (self regulation).
★ We are disappointed there is not a consistent standard and approach.
★ The Regulations are also silent on other issues, for example ensuring the welfare of greyhounds outside of tracks.
★ The RSPCA has also recently funded a research programme to identify areas where the welfare of racing greyhounds can be improved.

Legal situation
The Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides a framework for ensuring the welfare needs of animals¹ and that they are not subject to unnecessary suffering. Under this legislation the Welfare of Racing Greyhound Regulations 2010 set out a regulatory framework for this specific sector. Under the 2010 Regulations local authorities can license greyhound racing tracks except for those under the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) licensing regime. At present there are an estimated 25 greyhound racecourses licensed by the GBGB².

Anyone who operates a greyhound racing track without a licence under the Regulations (or from the GBGB) commits an offence and if found guilty is liable to imprisonment for a term of up to six months or a fine not exceeding level five on the standard scale or both. The Schedule to the Regulations cover the following conditions of the licence:

- **Veterinary attendance** - requires a vet to be in attendance both before and during any race, trial or sales trial and that the vet must inspect every greyhound intended to run beforehand in order to assess if it is fit to run. If the vet decides a greyhound is unfit to race the operator must remove the dog from that race, trial or sales trial and a register of attendance by the vet must be kept by the operator.
- **Veterinary facilities** - requires that the vet must have access to a room or mobile veterinary facility which is secure and suitable for examination and treating of greyhounds and that these facilities must be for the sole use of the vet.
- **Kennels** - require that kennels must be provided for at least 20% of the total number of greyhounds present at the track at any one time for racing or trialling and that the kennels must meet the requirements set out in the condition.
- **Identification of racing greyhounds** - requires all racing greyhounds to be identified with an ear-mark

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1 As defined by section 2 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006
2 Economic Impact of the British Greyhound Racing Industry 2014

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(a tattoo) and a microchip and registered with the database set up under the Regulations.

- **Record of racing greyhounds** - requires the operator to keep a record of every greyhound entered for a race including details of the owner and trainer for at least 10 years.
- **Injury records** - requires that the vet must make a record of any greyhound injured during a race or trial and that the operator must keep the record for at least 10 years.

**Welfare concerns for greyhounds**

The RSPCA starts from the position that there are recognised issues that impact upon the welfare of greyhounds throughout their life. These include breeding/importation, rearing, schooling, training, trialling, racing and retirement. We therefore believe that it is essential that the Regulations protect them from any welfare issues that may impact at any stage throughout their lives - from cradle to grave.

It is for these reasons that the RSPCA is a member of the Greyhound Forum. The Forum - largely made up of welfare organisations, although there are industry representatives on it - engages with the greyhound industry to try and encourage improvements to animal welfare for these animals.

While we welcome some parts of the Regulations, for example the requirement of veterinary presence and facilities at tracks, as well as permanent identification and the keeping of records, we remain concerned that they do not appear to go far enough to provide confidence in ensuring greyhound welfare.

We remain concerned that there is still a two-tier system of regulation between those tracks licensed by local authorities and those licensed by the GBGB (self regulation). We are disappointed there is not a consistent standard and approach. The Regulations are also silent on other issues, for example ensuring the welfare of greyhounds outside of tracks.

Greyhounds can spend around 90% of their time at their owners’ or trainers’ kennels and they can be kenneled there for many years yet the Regulations do not cover this aspect of their lives and we feel this is a missed opportunity for protecting animal welfare.

It has also become apparent that the industry (the GBGB) has failed to appoint the minimum number of stipendiary stewards recommended by its own review¹ conducted by Lord Donoghue which would allow more inspections of trainers kennels where required and work with trainers to improve welfare standards.

It is the view of the RSPCA that minimum standards for trainers’ kennels should be designed and based on scientific evidence, including more than just the physical kennel design, and take into account both the physical and psychological needs of the dogs so that environmental enrichment and socialisation is a key factor.

As part of the Regulations, injury data is collected and kept at each track. However in order to make sure this has an impact on the welfare of greyhounds, there are a number of improvements which are needed to be made to the Regulations:

- they should require that injury data is stored in one central database and analysed. This would better enable the identification of trends and assist with research on improvements.
- they should also require that an appropriate independent party is responsible for regularly monitoring this database in order to highlight tracks that have a high proportion of injuries. Such information is not transparent at present and remedial action can only be taken if this information is made available.
- the injury data should record all injuries at the race track (racing or trials) but also those that occur or are detected afterwards e.g. at the kennels. There are increasing concerns over how such information is recorded and could see under-reporting.

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http://www.greyhounds-donoughue-report.co.uk/

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Due to concerns about the fates of ex-racing greyhounds the Greyhound Forum has asked the industry to provide annual statistics on the fates of all racing greyhounds for over four years. It is a real disappointment that this information has still not been provided.

It has in the recent past been estimated that around 8000 greyhounds are retired each year\(^4\). The Retired Greyhound Trust report rehoming 3,742 dogs in 2013\(^5\) and other independent rescue and rehoming organisations also rehome retired greyhounds. However, the fate of every individual dog post retirement is not currently known.

While some may have been rehomed directly, sold or kept for breeding or as a pet, others may have been euthanased either due to track injury or because they are no longer able to race. Without this information it is extremely difficult to assess the fates of these dogs. The RSPCA continues to support the Forum in its efforts to improve and protect the welfare of dogs involved in racing.

**New research on greyhound welfare**

In 2009 the RSPCA commissioned a scoping study to identify the main welfare issues for racing greyhounds. This study resulted in two outcomes. The first identified the welfare issues resulting from breeding, rearing, racing and re-homing and the second developed a methodology to allow the issues to be prioritised.

Using the results from this study and following discussions within the RSPCA, we have recently funded a four year research programme at the University of Bristol. Three research projects have been identified and chosen to further our understanding of the impact of particular initiatives and refinements on racing greyhound welfare as well as tackling specific welfare issues. These are:

1. **Modelling racing greyhound population**

During past reviews of the greyhound industry, it has been suggested that particular initiatives and refinements (e.g. use of veteran races and starting racing older, or reducing racing frequency) may benefit dogs by reducing gaps in racing, or increasing racing career length, and thereby reducing the number of racing greyhounds required. Such claims are often countered by members of the industry as there is no empirical evidence to support them, and so the best ways to reduce the number of dogs remain unknown.

In this project, the research team will use publicly available data and state of the art statistical modelling techniques to explore the effect of a variety of suggested initiatives, and potential changes. They intend to test a wide range of previous claims, as well as initiatives suggested by people within the industry, exploring their impact on both the dogs’ career length, and racing profile. The team can then explore the likely results of changing each of these factors, and their knock-on effect on the number of greyhounds needed to meet racing quotas and on the dog population in general including the number of dogs in rehoming centres.

The project will then hopefully utilise additional data kept by trainers and track managers, such as oestrus suppression, training regimes, and the team hope to engage with the industry to ensure that the factors tested are relevant to them and hence the results are more likely to be taken on board to improve animal welfare. The team hope to work closely with a small number of tracks to fully model all relevant factors and to ensure that the data used is reliable.

The results from this project will enable the RSPCA to advise on the most beneficial initiatives to reduce greyhound numbers but that will also concurrently improve the welfare of individual racing greyhounds.

2. **Dental and periodontal disease in racing greyhounds**

Dental and periodontal disease are both claimed to be particularly prevalent in racing greyhounds. These are likely painful conditions and hence of welfare concern. They are also potentially costly to the industry and such disease may leave dogs more susceptible to other illnesses, may lead to premature career end and may incur significant costs to rehoming organisations.


\(^5\) [http://issuu.com/retiredgreyhoundtrust/docs/2013_annual_review_web](http://issuu.com/retiredgreyhoundtrust/docs/2013_annual_review_web)

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The research team aims to compare the prevalence of disease in racing greyhounds to that in rehomed and non-racing greyhound populations, to determine the extent of the problem. They then plan to carry out a study in collaboration with a small number of racing tracks, using simple quick dental inspections by a trained vet, to compare dogs of different breeding lines and experiencing different husbandry protocols, to determine factors linked to lower levels of dental disease. Finally they will liaise with the industry to determine a likely effective intervention, (e.g. brushing or cleaning regime, or use of a toy) to test experimentally during a controlled trial, ideally conducted with volunteer trainers.

The outcome of this study is likely to benefit, trainers, rehoming centres and dog welfare, by validating an effective and time efficient way to reduce dental and periodontal disease.

3. Transport of dogs
The final project will be of benefit to all breeds and sources of dogs, by determining the best way to transport dogs over short and long distances, and hence will be available to help organisations to help them formulate evidence-based guidelines. The researchers will use interviews and surveys to investigate the ways in which dogs are transported for many purposes and working roles. They then intend to carry out a controlled study to investigate the effect of a range of factors (e.g travelling forwards vs sideways or standing vs sitting) on dog’s comfort and stress during short and long journeys and their speed of recovery post transport. We hope to engage with the greyhound industry, as well as many other working dog industries, to ensure that this study has outcomes of maximal value. Results will enable the RSPCA to develop and distribute evidence-based and clear transport guidelines aimed at optimising the transportation not only of racing greyhounds but also dogs of other breeds transported for many purposes.

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