

# Born to Run

*The life of a racing greyhound*



# Conclusion after 37 years



Whether or not an animal's welfare is compromised depends more on who is in charge of its care than the purpose for which it is used.



# Born to .....



Most domestic animals are born with a specific purpose in mind:

Meat

Milk/eggs

Wool/fibre

Companionship

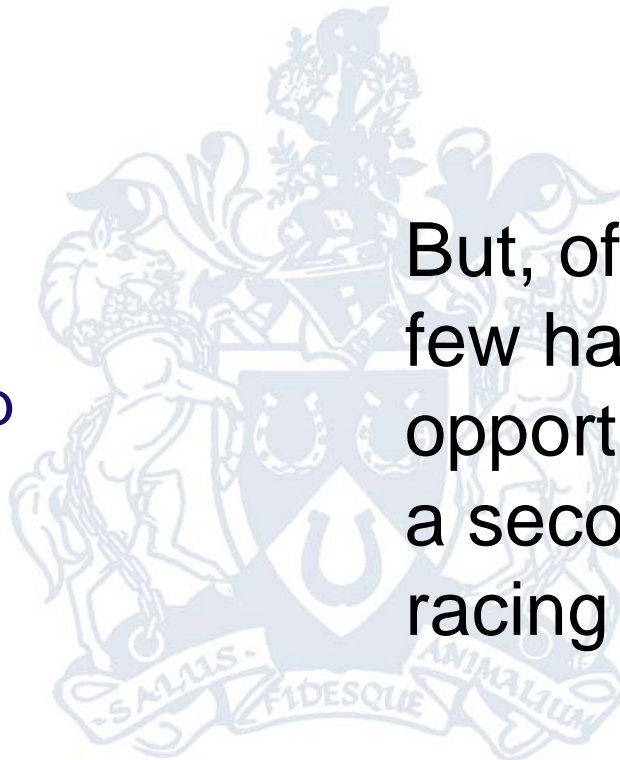
Showing

Sport

Military/Police

Assistance

But, of these, very few have the opportunity to enjoy a second career as racing animals do



## Do problems exist with greyhound racing?

- the industry's excessive surplus breeding practices
- the often cruel methods by which unwanted dogs are destroyed
- the daily conditions in which many dogs are forced to live
- the killing and maiming of bait animals, such as rabbits, during training exercises.

# Values vs Science



Are the criticisms based on sound scientific evidence or on perceptions based on cultural values?



# Dogs vs Pigs



Dogs occupy a unique position in British culture, although they share many characteristics with other species, especially pigs, that occupy an entirely different position.



Or do they??



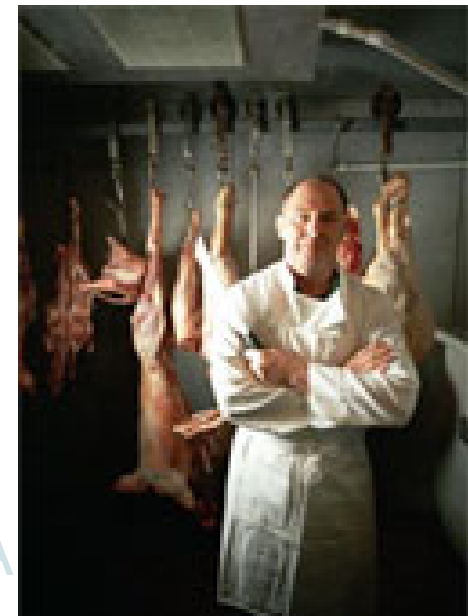
# A humane killer?



“No longer of use as racing dogs, the greyhounds were said to have been delivered to building merchant David Smith who shot them in the head with a bolt gun, then buried them in a one-acre plot behind his house.

Campaigners believe similar operations exist elsewhere the country.

Ben Bradshaw, minister for animal welfare, described Mr Smith's business as 'horrendous' and said he would review the evidence of his activities.”



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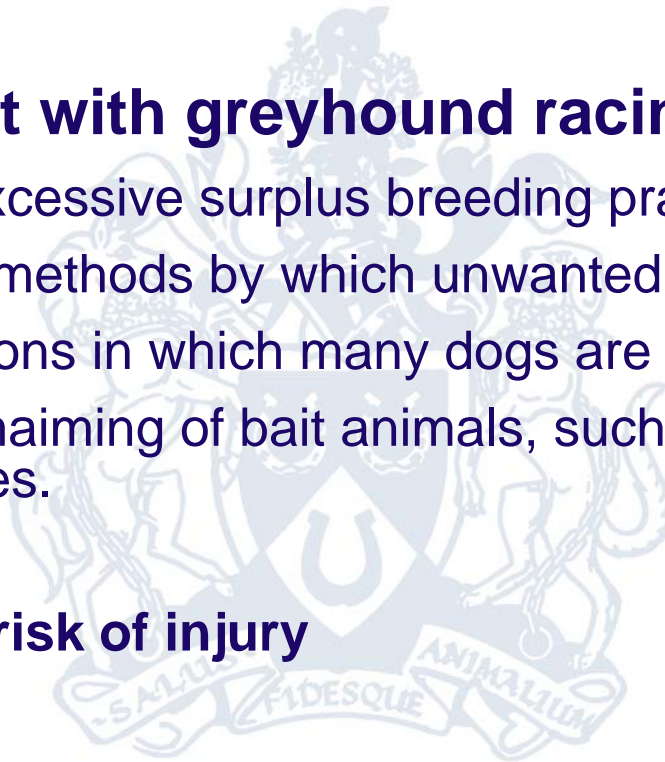
# Donoghue report



At root in the growing welfare debate is a fundamental difference of animals in our society. On one side are those, such as the welfare lobby, but going far beyond them among the wider public, who view the greyhounds and many other animals as sentient beings (like humans but clearly nicer) to be treated humanely and where possible sustained throughout happy and healthy lives. On another side (though there is much grey area in between), are those, often earlier related to rural life and agriculture, who will treat their animals well but view them primarily as commodities for commercial exploitation and to be disposed of economically and humanely once their commercial use is over.

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- the daily conditions in which many dogs are forced to live
- the killing and maiming of bait animals, such as rabbits, during training exercises.
- **no mention of risk of injury**



# Welfare is not inevitably compromised by risk



Imagine that you are all 70 kg pigs on the way to market. Your risk of death is virtually 100%. If you have been well fed and housed, received good veterinary care, transported under good conditions and humanely killed, no concerns will be expressed about your welfare.



Racing greyhounds should get the best deal possible throughout their lives.

- During breeding and rearing
- During their racing careers
- At the end of their racing careers and in retirement



# Racing vs Non-racing Animals



- Racing
  - Subject to regulatory control
  - In regular public view
  - Media scrutiny
  - Success depends on athletic performance
  - Provision of veterinary services
  - But, need to maintain standards in retirement
- Non-racing
  - Only control is through criminal law
  - May be locked away
  - No media scrutiny
  - Athleticism and health never tested
  - Veterinary attention has to be sought
  - Quality of life (good or bad) tends to be lifelong

**Better  
Regulation  
Task Force**

# Principles of Better Regulation



- Proportionality
- Accountability
- Consistency
- Transparency
- Targeting



# Principles of Better Regulation



Better Regulation is best served if the Regulatory body is independent of all vested interests.



# Regulatory Support for Safety and Welfare



- Safety is the top priority when framing the Rules
- Minimum qualifications and experience for attending veterinarians
- Pre and post race veterinary inspections
- Recording of track conditions and frequency/type of injuries
- Quantification of risk factors
- Interventions to minimise risk
- Mandatory report when animals retire

# Regulatory Support for Safety and Welfare



- Pre and post race testing (10,000 greyhound samples)
- Testing in training
- Medication rules
- Licensing inspections of kennels



# To Safeguard the Welfare of Racing Animals throughout their Lives



- If we are serious about the quality of greyhounds' lives in retirement, we need to know:
  - What happens to the puppies bred/imported each year?
    - 599 greyhound litters in 2006 – 3,000 puppies
    - 10,101 new registrations in 2006; 4000 runners on independent tracks
    - Difference made up by dogs imported from Ireland
    - RGT has rehomed 35,000 dogs in 30 years
  - What happens to retired racing animals?

# Wilsher S, Allen WR and Wood JLN (2006)

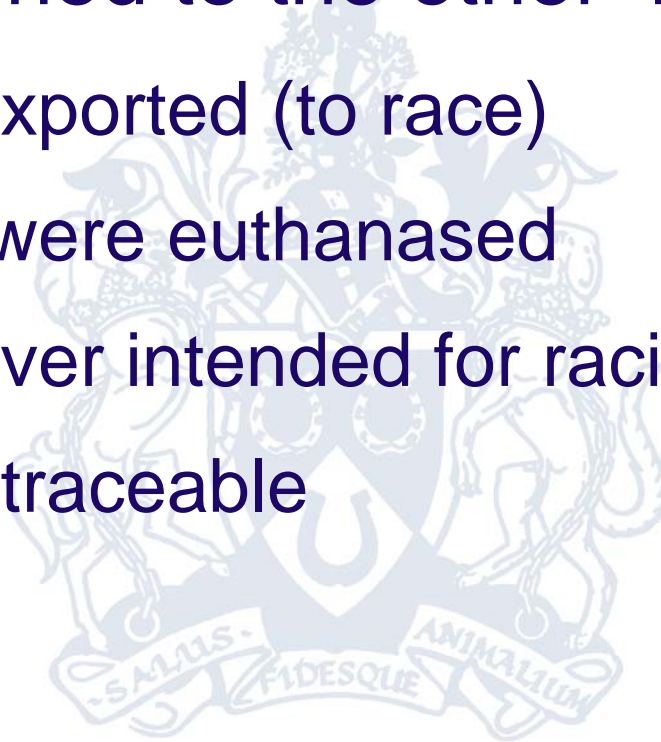


- 1022 foals (1999) followed for 3 years:
  - 537 entered training at 2 years
    - 327 ran at 2 years
    - 431 stayed in training at 3 years
  - 25 entered training at 3 years
  - 60 were intended for NH racing
- Of original 1022, 622 were trained for racing in GB

# Wilsher et al (2006)



- What happened to the other 400?
  - 289 were exported (to race)
  - 58 died or were euthanased
  - 17 were never intended for racing
  - 36 were untraceable



# Rule 18 – Responsibility of Owner



- (i) The NGRC Stewards shall hold the last registered Owner to be responsible for the welfare of a Greyhound and also for making acceptable arrangements for his/her retired Greyhound as follows :-
- the Greyhound be retained as a pet, or
  - the Greyhound be boarded at a Licensed Kennel, or
  - the Greyhound be boarded at a Kennel licensed by the local authority, or
  - the Greyhound be found a home through the Retired Greyhound Trust, or
  - the Greyhound be sold or found a home, responsibly, or
- I if it is necessary for the Greyhound to be euthanased either on humane grounds or because none of the above options are available, the Owner ensuring, subject to Rule 58, that such euthanasia is carried out by a registered Veterinary Surgeon.
- (ii) A registered Owner shall inform the NGRC if there is any change in ownership of a registered Greyhound and whether or not it is intended to enter in any Trial or Race again (see Rule 20).
- (iii) Failure to give notification under Rule 18(ii) within 28 Days of the Change of Ownership shall result in a penalty being levied and may result in the NGRC Stewards prohibiting an Owner from registering Greyhounds

# Are all racing animals suitable for a post racing career?



The majority of racing animals can be successfully rehomed. For the minority that are unsuitable for rehoming, either physically or mentally, humane euthanasia, by a veterinary surgeon, is the best option.



# The Retirement Certificate



## Why is it important to notify the NGRC after a greyhound has ceased racing?

Many greyhounds stay with their registered owners after they finish their racing careers. However, many do not, and are re-homed in a variety of ways that include owners finding homes for their greyhounds independently, to home-finding schemes of various charities, individual schemes run by the tracks and RGT schemes funded directly from the sport. If the NGRC are not made aware of who owns the greyhounds, we cannot begin to establish who is responsible for committing acts detrimental to the welfare of the greyhound. For this reason, every greyhound that has ceased racing with the NGRC must have a Retirement form sent in.

## How do I fill in the Retirement Certificate?

At first glance the form may appear a bit lengthy. However one rule of thumb to apply is that only **one** section is required to be completed at any time, **A, B, C** or **D**.

If you or the trainer have retained the greyhound, whether it be as a pet, for breeding or any other reason then fill in section **A**.

If your greyhound has been placed in the care of the Retired Greyhound Trust or other homing charity then fill in section **B**.

If your greyhound has been sold or given away to a new owner including fellow syndicate members fill in section **C**.

And finally in the sad event of the death of your greyhound please fill in section **D**.

The form also allows trainers to complete the form on behalf of the owner should this become necessary, however the responsibility is that of the **owner** to ensure that [Rule 18](#) is adhered to.

**Please remember that if your greyhound is to be used as a brood bitch or is to stand at stud, is sent to Ireland for racing or is to participate in Independent racing and it is not your intention to race it again on NGRC licensed tracks you must complete and return the NGRC retirement certificate.**

# Challenges in Retirement



- The main challenge is to maintain a high quality of care when animals change ownership after their first retirement home (since sports regulators have no control over unlicensed people)
- Assisted by:
  - Permanent identification
  - Well organised “safety nets”
  - Cohort study of both greyhounds leaving racing

# Born to run



Racehorses and greyhounds, on the whole, compare favourably with any other group of animals in the country in terms of the quality of their care while racing. We have to maintain this quality of care throughout their lives.



Thank you for your attention



Animal Health Trust  
the science behind animal welfare