

# Racing foes to release report detailing dog injuries

## Seek referendum to ban the sport

By April Simpson

GLOBE STAFF

Massachusetts racetracks reported 728 injuries to greyhound dogs in the past five years, with nearly 80 percent involving broken bones, according to a report by an animal rights group to be released today.

The report by the Committee to Protect Dogs — culled from reports submitted to the state by

racetrack operators — also details incidents in 2005, when 19 dogs died at Wonderland Greyhound Park in Revere from a form of horse flu. A couple of years earlier, the report said, a dog tested positive twice for cocaine.

Calling the toll inhumane, the Committee to Protect Dogs hopes to put a referendum on the 2008 ballot asking voters to end greyhound racing in the state by 2010. A referendum bid to end dog racing narrowly failed in 2000.

"There are dogs that are breaking their necks," said Christine

Dorchak, cochairwoman of the committee. "It's just not acceptable. Every dog injured counts."

But officials at the parks argue that the state's numbers tell an exaggerated story, because, unlike the owners of dogs kept for pets, the tracks must report every injury regardless of how minor it is. Track operators said racing greyhounds are neutered by a veterinarian authorized by the state Racing Commission, are kept in crates large enough for a Saint Bernard, spend most of their time outside their cages, and maintain

a healthy diet. Park officials said that the veterinarian checks the dogs after each race and that the parks typically have a 100 percent adoption rate for dogs that are no longer raced.

"They have to get out, they have to run around, and they have to exercise," said Gary Temple, kennel manager at Raynham Park, the only other track in the state. "I'm a dog lover myself. I would never work at a place that inhumanely treated dogs."

Between 2002 and June 2007, the antiracing group's report states, 439 dogs were injured at Raynham and 289 dogs at Wonderland. The report also alleges that, to save costs, the dogs are fed raw meat unfit for human consumption. Racing officials contend the meat is of high quality.

The report is being released as Governor Deval Patrick considers whether to support casino gambling, a measure animal rights advocates are concerned could jumpstart dog racing.

"If there were no casino-style gambling permitted, it would just be a matter of time before greyhound racing stops, because the fan base is limited and aging," said Wayne Pacelle, president of the national Humane Society.

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