

Business Blogs



The Business of Sports

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Dairyland Greyhound Track to close

By *Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel*

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Dairyland Greyhound Track in Kenosha, the state's last pari-mutuel greyhound racing track in the state, will close at the end of the year.

The announcement was made on Tuesday to employees. The track opened on June 20, 1990.

"It's a sad day for the Dairyland family and Kenosha community," Roy Berger, Dairyland executive vice president, said in a press release. "We looked at every opportunity to apply for racing dates in 2010, but there was no longer a way to remain a viable entity."

Berger said the ownership group would now focus on helping the track's 180 employees "transition to new jobs and helping our kennel owners and operators work in conjunction with the State of Wisconsin to find homes for the racing greyhounds either at other racetracks or through an adoption group."

At one time there were five greyhound tracks in the state. The others were the Geneva Lakes Kennel Club; the Fox Valley Greyhound Park in Kaukauna, the Wisconsin Dells Greyhound Park in Lake Delton and the St. Croix Meadows Greyhound Racing Park in Hudson.

When the tracks first opened, people flocked to them. There were more than 3.5 million visitors in 1991, the first year all five tracks were open. But then attendance began dropping steadily in the 1990s.

Dairyland said it lost \$3.4 million last year. The track also has reported losses to the state of \$2.82 million in 2007, \$2.84 million in 2006 and \$2.41 million in 2005.

Dog tracks opened in Wisconsin after voters in 1987 approved a constitutional amendment allowing the creation of a state-run lottery and legalizing pari-mutuel betting. In 1991, a federal judge ruled that because Wisconsin now had a lottery and legalized betting at greyhound tracks the state also had to let Indian tribes open casinos.

The ownership group is expected to continue efforts to support the application of the Menominee tribe to build a \$1 billion casino on the grounds of the track.

The closing of the tracks follows a national trend of greyhound tracks closing, a victim of changing tastes and the ability of casinos, many of them owned and operated by Indian tribes, to attract gamblers.

The Menominee are continuing to pursue a lawsuit against the federal government, challenging a denial of the project that was issued in the final days of the Bush administration.

Greyhound adoption groups say they expect hundreds of dogs to be available for adoption. The groups, spread around the Midwest, have had experience before in finding homes for the greyhounds.