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Undercover video raises questions about conditions at Tucson Greyhound Park

Posted: Dec 21, 2010 10:20 PM PST Updated: Dec 21, 2010 10:22 PM PST

By Heather Rowe - email

TUCSON (KOLD) - Since 1944, Tucsonans have been watching greyhounds race at Tucson Greyhound Park. But what you won't see and have never seen are where the dogs live, until now.

Undercover video shot earlier this year by non-profit animal welfare organization Grey2k has launched a heated debate on both sides.

"It is just plain wrong what is happening to greyhounds at Tucson Greyhound Park," says Christine Dorchak, founder of Grey2k. She says after learning about how race dogs really live, she put herself through law school just so she could put together legislation to put and end to dog racing everywhere.

"This is no way to treat a dog."

In the video, trainers show who they think are visitors through the process.

"These dogs are kept in total darkness all day long. They are let out a couple of times a day to relieve themselves in groups and then get right back in their cages."

"They live in confined cages barely large enough for them to stand up or turn around. Our investigators noted the majority of the dogs were muzzled inside their cages."

We took the video directly to Tucson Greyhound Park's CEO and general manager Tom Taylor.

Taylor says, 'They saw what they wanted to see."

Taylor says Tucson Greyhound Park is one of the best remaining racing facilities in the country. He calls the kennels an ideal place for dogs.

We asked, "Would you keep your dog like this?

Taylor said, "If it was a racing dog yes, if it was a pet no.

We asked, "What is the difference?"

Taylor answered, "One has a job and does a job and one doesn't. One has to stay in shape the other doesn't."

Some would argue, why not keep the dogs outside. Taylor answers, "They don't want to be outside."

But since voters passed a proposition in 2008 to protect the treatment of greyhounds at TGP, by law they must be outside for at least 6 hours a day. Taylor says that is the only part that isn't ideal at Tucson Greyhound Park and that even the dogs oppose it.

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"They will be out there barking and scratching at the gate to get back inside," he says. "Trainers don't like it, owners don't want their dogs out 6 hours a day and the dogs don't want out 6 hours a day. But the law says we have to so we do it."

But it is hard to know if they do always do it, even by Taylor's own admission.

"We don't make sure. There is no way we can. They only way we can is if we had someone sitting in their everyday.

We asked, "Do you trust that it is happening?"

"They tell us they are doing it."

According to Taylor, trainers log their hours. We asked the Arizona Department of Racing for those logs and other information on inspections. They had 30 days to give us the public records but we never received them. Dorchak says that has happened to her as well.

"They are not going to change we need to make the change for them," she says. "I think if the public looks at the video documentation that we are providing to the public they will contact the agency and demand better treatment for the dogs."

But we wanted to see for ourselves.

Taylor says, "If you walk in there you may not see the same thing they saw."

We asked to see it, but Taylor declined.

"I am not going to let the press in because you are going to show it to thousands of people and we don't know how they are going to take it. It doesn't make any sense to do that Heather. I could show you the Taj Mahal and people would say that it is too religious."

We asked, "Can't we just let the people decide?"

Taylor responded, "No. They won't. They will agree with these people."

We asked, "If you have nothing to hide and are prideful then..."

Taylor said, "I could show you the Mona Lisa and you could say that is horrible."

At this point it is hard to tell what is exactly happening behind the gates. But one thing that can be publicly seen six days a week all year long are the greyhounds racing at Tucson Greyhound park.

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