

Opinion Staff

Should Florida require filing injury reports for racing greyhounds?

© February 18, 2015 | Filed in: **Animals, Florida**



Animal rights activists are pushing bills in the Florida Legislature requiring operators of greyhound racing establishments to report all injuries sustained by their dogs to the Florida Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering and the Department of Business and Professional Regulation. (Photo by David Spencer/The Palm Beach Post)

Wagering on greyhound racing has been declining for years. No secret there. Everyone from breeders and kennel operators, to Florida revenue officials would agree.

But what's also no secret is the fact that many of the dogs still running on the state's 12 operational tracks suffer sometimes crippling, and even fatal injuries.

Yet, the state of Florida — along with Alabama — do not require reports to be filed about injuries to racing greyhounds. A coalition of groups, led by GREY2K USA and Humane Society of the United States, is trying to change that — again.

And this time, Florida lawmakers should listen. According to Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 129, injuries to racing greyhounds would have to be reported to the state Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering within seven days by track veterinarians or owners, trainers or kennel operators, depending on where the injury occurs.



Patrons at the Paddock Dining Room at the Palm Beach Kennel Club. (Photo by David Spencer/The Palm Beach Post)

And all indications are that the Senate bill, sponsored by Sen. Eleanor Sobel, D-Hollywood, will be one of the first measures passed by the full Senate when the annual legislative session starts next month. The "Victoria Q. Gaetz Racing Greyhound Protection Act," is named after animal-rights supporter Vicky Gaetz, the wife of Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville — and mother of Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach.

Similar bills died at the end of the last legislative session after becoming embroiled in larger issues surrounding the pari-mutuel industry — read that, gambling expansion.

This year, the bills' sponsors — including Democratic Sens. Jeff Clemens, of Lake Worth, and Maria Sachs, of Delray Beach, and Rep. Kevin Rader, D-Lake Worth — are armed with a sobering new report that should move lawmakers toward passage.

The report, released last week by GREY2K USA and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, documents nearly 12,000 injuries to racing greyhounds and 909 deaths from 2008 to 2014. What's more, it cites at least 27 cases of greyhound neglect and 16 race dogs found to have tested positive for cocaine.

Florida has more than half of the nation's 21 remaining dog tracks, does not require the injury reports. But last year, proposed legislation died due largely to lack of support in the House.
