

40,000 racing greyhounds hurt

Sanya Burgess Published: 22 February 2015



Rothery: dogs are traumatised (Bob Collier)

MORE than 40,000 greyhounds have been injured on British racing tracks in the past decade, according to an analysis of figures from the sport's ruling body.

Of those, more than 18,000 have not raced again, the analysis by animal welfare campaigners and *The Sunday Times* has found.

Industry insiders claim that many of the dogs have subsequently been put down. The Greyhound Board

of Great Britain (GBGB), the sport's governing body, rejects the claim.

There are 24 licensed greyhound racing tracks in the UK. According to the analysis, the track at Romford, east London, has the worst safety record. Last week a number of dogs were injured at Romford after they raced into starting gates that had been left on the track.

In 2013, there were 428 track injuries at Romford and 131 of the dogs have not raced since. Romford greyhound stadium said it kept a more detailed record of incidents than other tracks.

Greyt Exploitations, a welfare campaign group, spent four years collating the results for individual races

published by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain. It showed that 40,151 dogs were injured and 18,410 had not raced again. Many dogs were hurt more than once, taking the total number of injuries to 55,727.

Trudy Baker, co-ordinator for Greyt Exploitations, said that seven years after Lord Donoughue carried out a review into greyhound racing, the dogs were still being treated appallingly.

“The GBGB has attempted to conceal the extent of track injuries,” she claimed. “The industry has a moral duty to be accountable and transparent regarding a dog’s fate once they’re deemed a financial liability. Greyhounds are sentient creatures — not disposable gambling chips.”

Debra Rothery, the founder of Tia Rescue, a greyhound rescue home near Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, said: “I get 250 greyhounds passing through my doors each year. Some of them never leave. They are so traumatised they stay with us for ever.”

The greyhound industry attracts more than 2m visitors a year — down from 3.5m a decade ago — and £1.3bn is wagered annually on the races.

GBGB does not publish the number of injuries to dogs or what happens to them afterwards. Under current rules it is not required to.

Simon Banks of GBGB said: “We vigorously dispute the assertion that many of those dogs who did not race again were put down.”

He said the figures compiled by the campaign group were “reliant on weak data, badly analysed to reach flawed conclusions”. He declined to say whether the finding that 40,151 dogs were injured over the past 10 years was accurate but said many racing dogs went on to live a happy life in retirement, including his own, who finished lame at Crayford in 2010.