



HOBBIES & INTERESTS

Agreement means dog racing returns to Texas

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Racing is coming back to Gulf Greyhound Park and other tracks around the state. (KTRK)

Saturday, July 16, 2016

LA MARQUE, TX -- Dog racing will resume in Texas following an agreement between track owners and breeders that will result in an abbreviated series of events over the next two years.

The first slate of races will be held at Valley Race Park in the South Texas city of Harlingen from November through February, The [Galveston County Daily News](#) reports. There will be a total of 360 races and the total purse - the amount distributed to dog owners - will come to about \$2.2 million.

Races then will move to Gulf Greyhound Park in La Marque, near Galveston, from November 2017 through the following February.

David Peck, president of the Texas Greyhound Association, said with the agreement in place, the focus now can turn to modernizing the industry and lobbying for changes to state law.

"You can't compete with casinos with your hands tied behind your back," Peck told the newspaper. "I don't think

people have given up on racing. They just don't want to go sit at the track all day and eat hot dogs and hamburgers."

Gulf Greyhound Park was the last track to host live racing when it suspended races last year, blaming competition from Louisiana casinos, rising costs and inability to get expanded gambling authorized at the track.

In April, the Texas Racing Commission, which regulates dog and horse racing, approved the agreement for tracks to host a fresh schedule of racing.

People who raise racing dogs say the six-month layoff since the last races were held has been difficult.

Sissy Sabell, manager of Big Water Greyhounds in La Marque, said her farm has about 25 puppies, but that when races were held year-round at Gulf Greyhound Park, she had as many as 90 dogs.

"The Texas Greyhound Association and tracks are working together to keep racing going, which is a good thing," Sabell said.

But Grey2K USA, a Massachusetts-based organization working to end dog racing, criticized the plan and argued that it's a delaying tactic until gambling at tracks can be expanded.

"It's a sham," said the group's president, Carey Thiel. "It won't be economically viable from Day 1. Clinging to this hope is not good for local communities, it's not good for the dogs and at one point they'll have to face the inevitable."

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