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Three greyhounds put down after racing injuries in Canberra in recent weeks

By Christopher Knaus
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Three greyhounds have been put down in less than a month after suffering racing injuries at Canberra's racing club.



Stewards reports from recent races show that two greyhounds, Rebel Whip and Nightwatchman, were euthanised on July 24, after being seriously injured in races.



Three greyhounds were put down after suffering racing injuries in Canberra in less than a month.

Rebel Whip, who was less than two-years-old, fractured her leg during a qualifying trial and was humanely euthanised with the consent of the owner.

Another dog, Nightwatchman, fractured his hock - a common injury in greyhound racing - and was similarly euthanised.

Two weeks later, a greyhound named Alpha also fractured his right hock and was humanely euthanised.

The three dogs were checked by the racetrack vet. The Canberra Greyhound Racing Club said they had suffered "catastrophic" and life-threatening injuries.

But a leading animal welfare expert, University of Queensland Professor Clive Phillips, said such injuries could be treated, at a substantial cost, and the dogs given a life post-racing.

Professor Phillips said greyhounds were regularly put down because they were no longer worth keeping alive.

"It's an economic process," Professor Phillips said.

"While there is the possibility to repair a damaged pelvis or the hock, it's not done because the dog has little or no financial value."

Canberra Greyhound Club's spokesman Kel Watt said the decision to euthanise Rebel Whip, Nightwatchman, and Alpha, were not economic, and that the animals were put down after advice from a vet.

"The vet always makes a decision, so in his opinion they were catastrophic, in other words they were life-threatening," Mr Watt said.

"So not just career-ending and not just economic."

Between January and March, two dogs were euthanised after suffering catastrophic injuries, according to the club's injury report.

Ten suffered minor injuries in that time, and another two were classified as medium.

Mr Watt said injuries were rare, and euthanasia even rarer.

He said 12,000 greyhounds raced at the track annually, including in trials and training, but only five suffered breaks.

But greyhound support groups say they are able to take on dogs with injured hocks and other serious injuries, rehabilitate them, and provide them with a good post-racing life.

ACT Greyhound Support Network volunteer Cindy Daley, whose group works with re-homing organisations, said any greyhound that made it to the couch was a "miracle".

"I actually have a greyhound that had an injured hock lying on my couch right now, I know this is a recoverable injury," Ms Daley said.

"The greyhounds that I adopted suffered a broken hock, the hock was pinned because they were going to try to race the dog again.

"It was catastrophic from the POV (point of view) of him not being able to race again. But from the POV of him being a pet, he is not catastrophic."

She said her group had 530 members, all of whom were volunteers, and had helped to re-home 300 dogs in about four years.

Ms Daley said she had another dog whose leg was amputated.

"There is an owner out here for every dog. So if it's a case of amputation, we've homed three-legged dogs," she said.

"So my view is that they all deserve a second shot."

Mr Watt said a new policy was being adopted by the club to relieve economic pressure on owners. It would see the club take responsibility for paying for the rehabilitation and re-homing of injured dogs.

The ACT government plans to end greyhound racing in Canberra, and the industry has repeatedly been told it has no future in the territory.