



Greyhound injuries still unknown in Florida

344 deaths since 2013

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The state has yet to implement greyhound injury reporting policies despite lawmaker approval that requires tracks report when a greyhound has been injured.

Since 2013, a greyhound running for money in Florida has died roughly once every 4 days.



But, during that same time frame, it's still unknown how often a greyhound was injured on a track.

After years of debate over the issue, in March the Florida legislature included a provision in the state budget that requires the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering to implement injury reporting through the creation of a new Administrative Rule.

"They are currently working to implement information that will be consistent with the requirements set by Florida Statute," said DBPR spokesperson Kathleen Keenan.

But history has shown that process could take years. In 2010, lawmakers approved a measure that required track operators notify the state within 18 hours of a greyhound's death at a track or racing kennel in Florida, but the rules didn't actually take effect until the spring of 2013.

"This is an urgent problem. Every day, greyhounds are suffering broken legs and other serious injuries at Florida dog tracks," said Carey Thiel of Grey2K USA, a greyhound advocacy group that pushed for injury reporting requirements. "Right now, these injuries are being hidden from the public," he said.

This summer, Thiel's group monitored track video of races at the Palm Beach Kennel Club in West Palm Beach and took note of races where a greyhound collided with another dog. The group tracked 10 collisions over the course of three months. It is unknown if any of those collisions resulted in serious injuries or death. According to state records, Palm Beach Kennel Club reported two deaths over the summer. Both occurred in June.

"the division is currently working to implement information that will remain consistent with the requirements set by Florida Statute," said DBPR spokesperson Kathleen Keenan.

Palm Beach Kennel Club, summer 2016

Florida is one of just 5 states around the country that still allow greyhound racing. The Sunshine State is home to twelve tracks, the most of any state nationwide.

"Palm Beach Kennel Club is the preeminent dog track in the world. To its credit, Palm Beach has directed its attention to some humane issues. Nevertheless, it is not immune from the culture of cruelty that permeates the greyhound industry," said Theil.

In August, Thiel testified at a public workshop in Tallahassee organized as the first legal step toward implementing injury reporting requirements. He fears the Florida Greyhound Association, a group that represents greyhound breeders will attempt to try to keep the rule from being carried out.

"These industry lobbyists have told the Department it does not have the authority to create an injury reporting Rule. We believe the Department will reject this cynical claim, but do not yet have confirmation. We aren't taking this victory for granted," he said.

But according to Jack Cory with the Florida Greyhound Association, "our members support implementing sound-public policy. Injury reporting without injury prevention accomplishes nothing without prevention of injuries before they happen," he said in a statement. Cory said his Association supported laws to require injury reporting at tracks along with other measures to protect greyhounds like safer racing surfaces and insulate exposed electrical wires on tracks.

Still, without injury reporting polices in place, Grey2 K USA fears greyhound collisions like the ones captured on video at the Palm Beach Kennel Club this summer will continue to occur with potentially catastrophic results.



In response, a spokesperson from the Palm Beach Kennel Club sent us the following statement:

"Palm Beach Kennel Club and kennel operators take their greyhound welfare obligations very seriously. PBKC has made significant progress in attempting to reduce greyhound injuries at the track through various measures, including improvements to track surfaces, new safer lure technologies, safer fencing, widening of turns and other techniques. Greyhound racing is proud of these advances and we are committed to making further meaningful progress on this front. PBKC follows all current statutes and rules pertaining to greyhound racing in Florida."

Greyhound deaths on Florida tracks:

2016- 62

2015- 93

2014- 113

2013- 76

source: FL Dept. of Business & Professional Regulation

344 greyhounds have died as a result of racing for money since 2013, state records show.

Florida's active greyhound tracks:

Daytona Beach

Derby Lane

Ebro

Flagler

Jacksonville/Orange Park

Mardi Gras Hollywood

Melbourne

Naples/Fort Myers

Orlando

Palm Beach

Pensacola

Sarasota

Investigative reporter Katie LaGrone has been covering issues concerning the treatment of Florida greyhound dogs since 2014.