

Greyhound deaths at racetracks continue

360 dog deaths reported at Florida tracks since 2013



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DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. - A racing greyhound named F.F. Maverick had just sprinted out of the starting gate at the Daytona Beach Kennel Club and was about to make the first turn when the 2-year-old dog bumped into two other greyhounds.

Video posted on the racing website raceinfo.com on September 28th shows F.F. Maverick tumble on the sandy surface and roll several times before disappearing off the track.

[Read the previous story: Greyhound deaths investigated at Central Florida dog tracks]
[http://www.clickorlando.com/news/greyhound-deaths-investigated-at-central-florida-dog-tracks_20151107090943726]

A track veterinarian later determined F.F. Maverick “suffered a severe neck injury” that was “catastrophic and not repairable,” according to a state investigative report.

The greyhound, believed to be less than 2 years old, was euthanized as a result of the racing injury, records show.

“It is a particularly violent death. There's no doubt Maverick suffered greatly before he died,” said Carey Theil, executive director of GREY2K USA.

“It's a terrible case. But it is one of many.”

Theil's organization, which is pushing to end dog racing, has been compiling information about greyhound deaths since Florida lawmakers began requiring race tracks to report fatalities on their property more than three years ago.

Since May 2013, at least 360 greyhounds have died at Florida tracks, state reports compiled by GREY2K indicate, an average of one death every three or four days.

At least 52 of those were reported at the Daytona Beach Kennel Club, where F.F. Maverick suffered the fatal injury.

Only one other Florida track, Derby Lane in St. Petersburg, reported more deaths with 54.

“That is absolutely unacceptable,” said Theil.

“It's something the track should be held to account for, and it's something the local community should be very concerned about.”

“The Daytona Beach Kennel Club & Poker Room takes the safety of the greyhound athletes that race at our venue very seriously,” track spokesman Glen White told News 6 in a prepared statement.

“Our safety practices and procedures are developed with veterinarians and animal experts to focus on the animals' safety at all times. Our racing operation exceeds Florida's safety standards and the best practices governing racetracks around the country. In addition, we support the Greyhound Pets of America by averaging more than 500 greyhound adoptions each year.”

Representatives with Daytona Beach Kennel Club did not provide details about any measures it might be taking to reduce dog fatalities at its track.

The Florida Greyhound Association, which represents dog owners and breeders, has suggested that the number of deaths at racetracks is relatively low considering the large number of greyhounds that participate in the sport.

“One death, prematurely, of a racing greyhound is too many. But these are racing greyhounds,” association lobbyist Jack Cory told News 6 in 2014. “If you stopped live greyhound racing today, you would put 8,000 greyhounds at risk. There is no way to absorb them in the adoption program.”

The Florida Greyhound Association opposes “decoupling,” a proposed change to state law that would allow tracks to end greyhound racing but still operate more profitable forms of gambling like card rooms.

According to the association, the move would effectively shut down greyhound racing in Florida, leading to the loss of about 3,000 jobs.

“F.F. Maverick died so that Daytona could have their poker room,” said Theil.

“The only reason that dog was racing was because state law says the track has to race dogs in order to have their poker room. That makes absolutely no sense.”

Theil hopes state lawmakers will renew efforts to decouple dog tracks in the 2017 legislative session.

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