



Florida House Panel Backs Plan To Ban Steroids In Racing Greyhounds

By [REGAN MCCARTHY \(/PEOPLE/REGAN-MCCARTHY\)](#) • MAR 8, 2017



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CREDIT RAINER HUNGERSHAUSEN

Florida is one of the few states where greyhounds continue to race. While some are pushing for the end of the practice, others counter the industry helps ensure the dogs are well cared for. Now lawmakers are looking into a measure intended to create more protections for the animals.

Of the 19 greyhound tracks in the United States, Representative Carlos Guillermo Smith says 12 are in Florida. The Orlando Democrat says that’s just one reason Florida should end the use of anabolic steroids for its racing dogs.

“What happens here could be followed by other states and in the few states where this industry still remains,” Guillermo Smith says.

Guillermo Smith says based on his discussions with a number of veterinary experts, there’s only one reason racing greyhounds are

given anabolic steroids—to keep female dogs from going into heat ensuring they can continue racing year round. Rep. Jared Moskowitz (D-Coral Springs) has another explanation.

“It’s cheating! People bet on these dogs,” Moskowitz says. “Some of the dogs are getting steroids. Some of them are not. How come in every other sport it’s cheating, but with dog racing its ‘medically necessary?’”

While some representatives of the greyhound industry argue there are medically necessary reasons for steroid use—saying the health of their dogs is there primary concern, Carey Theil with the organization Grey2K says that depends on what kind of steroids a person is talking about.

“It’s common to use steroids like prednisone in veterinary medicine. That’s not what we’re talking about. This bill addresses a very narrow type of drugs—anabolic steroids—these are the male hormone testosterone or synthetic versions of testosterone. That is specifically what we’re talking about,” Theil says.

Some lawmakers pushed for an exemption that would allow use of the drug for racing greyhounds in carefully regulated circumstances. But Guillermo Smith says that leaves the door open for bad actors to take advantage.

“I am of the point of view that any amendment to allow for the use of steroids on these racing dogs would essentially legalize their use because then they would use essentially any excuse available to be able to pump these dogs full of steroids so they don’t miss racing days and they can save money,” Guillermo Smith says.

Meanwhile, Rep. Alex Miller (R-Sarasota) says she’d like to see an end to dog racing. But while a plan to end a live racing requirement for pari-mutuels is moving in the Senate, it’s not included in the House plan. So she says for now, Guillermo Smith’s plan will have to do.

“I think the expression ‘death by a thousand paper cuts,’ we will have death, or death of greyhound racing, by a thousand animal welfare bills as far as I’m concerned,” Guillermo Smith says.

The measure passed through the House Tourism and Gaming Control Subcommittee Wednesday. A similar measure has not yet been heard in the Senate.

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