



Greyhound racing: euthanasia of healthy dogs sparks call for stronger penalties

Demand follows one owner putting down six healthy dogs within three weeks of getting them, according to Greyhound Racing NSW internal documents

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A New South Wales greyhound owner was able to put down six young, healthy dogs within three weeks of obtaining them, according to internal records.

The case, and others like it, have prompted a renewed push by the NSW Greens for a breeding cap and stronger penalties for vets and owners who euthanise healthy greyhounds.

NSW's upper house last year voted in favour of releasing thousands of pages of documents held by Greyhound Racing NSW, the body responsible for governing and regulating the industry.

The first set of documents was handed over late last year and a second volume is due to be released later this month, despite attempts by Greyhound Racing NSW to prevent disclosure.

From: [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, 3 August 2016 11:14 AM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Intelligence Referral - [redacted]

Hi [redacted]

As per our discussion, Intelligence is referring the below matter to Investigations regarding [redacted]

In Summary: [redacted] submitted an Owner Application to GRNSW in June 2016 accompanied with NORs, Transfer forms and euthanasia certificates for SIX greyhounds he had taken possession of and had put down in the space of 3 weeks. None of the forms were properly filled out nor were they signed by the respective parties. Technically the greyhounds were not owned by [redacted] and so he did not have the authority to euthanise them. I was contacted by the wife of [redacted] (listed as the owner for several of the greyhounds), [redacted] who stated that she had expressly told [redacted] that if he didn't want the greyhounds he could give them back. She stated they never gave him permission to euthanise the greyhounds and she was quite distraught about it.

I have created an investigation in the Investigations Spreadsheet (No. 2016126) and have copied the forms for each respective greyhound into a folder. If you have any further questions on this please feel free to come and see me.

An internal email from Greyhound Racing NSW about an owner who allegedly had six healthy greyhounds put down within three weeks of receiving them.

The initial documents revealed a series of examples in which trainers attempted to put down dogs unnecessarily.

In one case in the state's north-east, a former greyhound trainer euthanised six healthy dogs within three weeks of taking possession of them.

The man had the dogs put down despite an offer by their previous owners to take them back, according to internal records.

Greyhound Racing NSW's intelligence team was contacted by the original owner's wife, who was said to be "deeply distressed" by the man's actions.

"Intelligence was contacted by [redacted] on 23 June, 2016, who was deeply distressed by the fact that her healthy, young greyhounds had been put down," internal case notes said.

"Stated that [redacted] was told if he couldn't keep them that he was to return them. [Redacted] stated they only gave dogs on request by a friend [redacted] who stated [redacted] wanted to get into the industry. [Redacted] had asked that they give some greyhounds to get him started."

Greyhound NSW took no action against the man, because he was no longer a registered trainer, and did not refer him to other authorities, because no crime had been committed.

The special inquiry into greyhound racing in NSW found that up to 68,000 dogs were killed as "wastage" in the past 12 years.

Stewards' reports showed that dogs are still regularly being put down immediately after races in NSW.

Twenty-one greyhounds have been euthanised at tracks so far this year. Vastly more dogs were injured during racing but not immediately put down. Their fate after they left the track is unknown.

The NSW Greens MLC Mehreen Faruqi fears that greyhounds are still unnecessarily being euthanised, either due to minor injuries, underperformance, or cost.

"Their whole business model relies on the overbreeding of greyhounds and the killing of dogs that aren't fast enough, or are no longer profitable," Faruqi said.

The internal documents revealed another case last year, in which a steward was forced to intervene to stop a veterinarian euthanising a greyhound that had a swollen leg.

After the trainer left the room I made it very clear to [REDACTED] that we do not euthanize greyhounds on track unless the injury is so severe that it is in the best interests of the greyhound to be euthanized.

That said, I find it disturbing that if I was not in the kennelling block that day a greyhound would have been euthanized unnecessarily. There is far too much going on throughout the day for the Stewards to be everywhere and in control of every aspect of the meeting. They rely heavily on the aptitude of kennelling staff and the vet on track, which at the moment does not meet the standards one would expect to proficiently run a race meeting.

Best regards,
[REDACTED]

An internal email from Greyhound Racing NSW about a steward who was forced to intervene to stop a veterinarian euthanising a greyhound that had a swollen leg.

The dog's trainer approached the vet after a race in the Hunter, saying his dog had broken its hock and needed to be put down.

"At the time [the trainer] seemed quite annoyed that I refused to allow his greyhound to be euthanised on track," the steward wrote in his report to Greyhound Racing NSW.

"I find it disturbing that if I was not in the kennelling block that day a greyhound would have been euthanized unnecessarily. There is far too much going on throughout the day for the stewards to be everywhere and in control of every aspect of the meeting."

The dog was treated and later returned to racing.

The industry is still preparing for a suite of animal welfare reforms following the dramatic backflip on the greyhound ban last year.

Planned reforms to the industry will be shaped by the recommendations of the greyhound industry reform panel, which were delivered last month.

The panel's key recommendation was for the creation of a new integrity commission to oversee the industry and the introduction of tougher penalties for live-baiting. It also recommended tighter controls on euthanasia.

The panel did not recommend a breeding cap or setting target dates to achieve zero euthanasia.

Faruqi said the panel's failure to recommend a cap meant greyhounds would continue to be overbred and "disposed" of.

She called for specific penalties for veterinarians who allow healthy dogs to be put down, or for anyone who attempts to intimidate or harass vets into performing euthanasia unnecessarily.

"Surely, the industry can't be allowed to go back to business-as-usual, putting down dogs when they are no longer financially viable," Faruqi said.

"We need to break this culture of cruelty and ensure that veterinarians, who under the proposed recommendations are the only pathway to disposing of unwanted dogs, are not euthanising healthy dogs or being pressured to do so by the industry participants."

Greyhound Racing NSW said it had already introduced breeding restrictions in mid-2015. Those restrictions limit the number and frequency of litters for breeding females.

A spokesman said that had coincided with a 55% drop in pups born year-on-year until December last year.

It also introduced measures last year to force owners to seek written consent from Greyhound Racing NSW before euthanising healthy greyhounds.

The spokesman said a number of other initiatives were currently being considered, including forcing owners to take all reasonable steps to re-home greyhounds where appropriate, and increasing the fees for registering litters of pups.

"GRNSW would be happy to meet with the Greens to discuss its proposals to reduce euthanasia and how they could be effectively implemented," he said.

"This would be preferable rather than hearing them second-hand through an intermediary in the media."

The documents also suggest that Greyhound Racing NSW kept a “watch list” of vets with high euthanasia rates but the organisation has denied such a list exists.

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