

Sunday, June 28, 2015

## More than \$77 million in subsidies paid out to breeders since 2002, records show

by **Joel Ebert**, Federal Courts Reporter

West Virginia greyhound breeders have received \$77.5 million in subsidies since 2002, according to an analysis of records obtained by the Daily Mail.

In response to a public records request, the West Virginia Racing Commission provided the Daily Mail with a summary of how much every single greyhound breeder in the state has received through the Greyhound Breeder Development Fund dating back more than a decade.

Although the fund, which derives from both pari-mutuel distributions and gambling operations, began after being authorized by the state Legislature in 1975, the commission was only able to provide data from 2002 to now.

Since then, subsidy payments to breeders annually have ranged from \$4 million to \$7 million.

In 2007, \$7.5 million in subsidies were handed out to the state's greyhound breeders, which was the most of any year since 2002.

So far for 2015, \$1.2 million has been awarded to breeders, as of May 15.

Unlike the state's Thoroughbred Development Fund, greyhound breeders are required to live in West Virginia. The breeders are provided monthly payments that are based on the performance of their dogs.

"The development fund payments are based on points earned for a month," said Joe Moore, the commission's acting executive director.

As has been the case in recent years, the vast majority of payments went

to a small handful of families, individuals and businesses.

Since 2002, about 48 percent — \$35 million — of the total subsidies was given to the top 10 recipients.

Critics of the state's greyhound racing industry say the latest finding, which comes as state lawmakers continue to discuss the potential of ending the practice, is out of step compared to other states.

"We have seen subsidies in other states but they tend to be given out to many more people," said Christine Dorchak, president of Grey2K USA, an organization working to end greyhound racing nationwide.

"When lawmakers study the issue now, they're going to see the vast majority are going to enrich a handful of greyhound breeders."

Dorchak's organization has continuously called for West Virginia's public officials to end the practice, which she said is outdated.

"It doesn't make sense to just flush money down the toilet in terms of trying to drive interest in an industry that's gone the way of the horse and buggy," she said.

Breeders have defended the development fund, arguing that it is necessary to not only cover the expenses associated with breeding greyhounds but also to serve as an incentive to initially enter the business.

Last month, Pat McMillon, a breeder in Alum Creek, told the Daily Mail the fund has helped cover expenses associated with his day-to-day operations.

"No one is getting rich off it," he said.

But records indicate the vast majority of the \$77 million has gone to a small group of people and their kennels.

Monroe Racing Inc. and its owner, Delmos Monroe, took in the most money, with \$5.1 million.

Joe and Diana Douglas received the second most — \$4.9 million.

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin's family members, including his late mother, Freda, father, Carl, and brother, Carl II, and their kennel, have received \$4.3 million in subsidies, followed by McMillon who has taken in \$3.8 million.

Henry and Loretta Maupin received the fifth most, collecting \$3.3 million.

Other notable recipients including West Virginia Owners and Breeders Association president Sam Burdette and local car dealer Lester Raines have received \$473,000 and \$840,000, respectively.

The latest finding comes as state lawmakers continue to discuss the possibility of ending the state's greyhound racing industry. The issue came up in the state Senate during the 2015 legislative session where the West Virginia Owners and Breeders Association was pushing for a state buyout for breeders and owners should lawmakers end dog racing. Complications hindered progress on the matter and senators drafted a resolution allowing the Joint Committee on Government and Finance to study the state's racing and gaming industries.

Contact writer Joel Ebert at 304-348-4843 or [joel.ebert@dailymailwv.com](mailto:joel.ebert@dailymailwv.com). Follow him on [twitter.com/joelebert29](https://twitter.com/joelebert29).