

Ross asked Department of Agriculture to cut funding to greyhound industry after RTÉ doc

The Minister for Sport said some of his constituents were outraged by the abuses in the greyhound industry that were revealed.

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MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, Tourism and Sport Shane Ross asked that government funding to the greyhound industry be terminated in the wake of the RTÉ Investigates programme, which highlighted how thousands of greyhounds were killed between 2014 and 2015 because they weren't fast enough.

Ross told Minister of State Andrew Doyle that he was "deeply concerned" about the findings of the programme, and his constituents were both "shocked and angered by the revelations within the footage".

Dozens of complaints were also made by members of the public to a number of ministers, as well as the Taoiseach, over the contents of the programme and they urged the government to suspend funding to the industry.

The RTÉ programme claimed that the Irish greyhound industry is breeding 1,000% more puppies than it needs, leading to a cull of thousands of racing dogs every year.

RTÉ's report was based on a review by consultancy firm Preferred Results Ltd on behalf of the Irish Greyhound Board carried out in September 2017.

It found that 16,000 greyhounds are born every year, and 5,987 of those are killed because they fail to make qualification times or their performance declines.

Greyhound racing is set to receive €16.8 million in funding this year with supports coming from the Department of Agriculture.

Ross told Doyle on 1 July – the junior minister at the Department of Agriculture with special responsibility for the greyhound industry – that he would "appreciate if you could



Minister Shane Ross

Image: Sam Boal/Rollingnews.ie

look into these matters with urgency to ensure a cessation to further animal suffering”.

“My constituents and I would like to see action taken in respect to this issue and have asked that funding from the Department of Agriculture be terminated in light of the revelations and animal welfare violations within the industry,” he said.

Some constituents would prefer the sport to be banned in its entirety.

Ross had also raised the issue at Cabinet, telling other ministers that the practices uncovered amounted to “subsidised cruelty”.

In response, Doyle told Ross that any allegations of breaches of animal welfare rules will be taken very seriously and would be thoroughly investigated.

“The department will be developing an action plan with Bord na gCon in the coming weeks, in order to address the breeding levels in the greyhound industry,” he said.

Bord na gCon will also be using the provisions laid down in the newly signed Greyhound Racing Act 2019 to improve the traceability of greyhounds. And there will be a review of how exchequer funding is allocated within Bord na gCon with a view to refocusing the industry on welfare issues.

Complaints

Ross and his constituents weren't alone in raising their dissatisfaction with the Department of Agriculture following the RTÉ Investigates programme, as dozens of emails and letters were sent in.

“A national disgrace in the 21st century,” one wrote. “I am a taxpayer and going forward I do not want a cent of my money given to support this heinous industry,” another said.

The night the programme aired, one said: “Am I really being taxed in order to boil greyhounds alive, or shot as healthy young dogs because they can't run fast. I can't see the good people of Carlow Kilkenny supporting this carry on. Words fail me.”

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Minister Paschal Donohoe were among those who received letters from angry constituents over the contents of the programme.

In every instance, the letter in reply from Doyle outlined what he told Minister Shane Ross.

“My office will issue further updates on this matter in due course,” he said.

With reporting from Christina Finn

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