



PE1758: End Greyhound Racing in Scotland

Q1 What is your view about the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland?

Worldwide, dog tracks operate on a platform of cruelty, housing dogs in extreme confinement and then placing them at risk of injury and death every time they are let out of their cages to race. Therefore we support all efforts to protect greyhounds and outlaw this outdated, unpopular and discredited activity in Scotland. Specifically, we agree with the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission's conclusion that "[O]n average, a dog bred for racing in Scotland currently has poorer welfare than the average of other dogs in the population" (page 24) and that "[T]here are significant risks of welfare harms to dogs engaging in racing" (page 22). We further concur with SAWC that "welfare for dogs would be improved, if they were not involved in racing" (page 22).

The experience of the Greyhound Awareness League, the oldest greyhound homing charity in Scotland, speaks volumes. GAL states that "[D]ogs commonly arrive for rehoming in poor condition (underweight), with poor detention, poor coat condition and with high worm and flea burdens...[and] that dogs relinquished due to injuries often do not have veterinary records for treatment of injury" (page 16-17). SAWC concluded that "[A]t least for some professional kennels, once a dog's racing career has ended there is little attention paid to nutrition, health and general care" (page 17).

SAWC acknowledges the "inherent risk of injury or fatality, regardless of whether this was independent or regulated" (page 17-18). The Commission determined that even if a dog track is regulated by the GBGB, the self-regulator's welfare strategy is "unlikely to have a significant impact on injury rates in dogs in the foreseeable future" (page 21).

We second SAWC's observation that, "[T]here are several causes of welfare concern, particularly the risk of injury or death at the track, the oversupply of puppies and the conditions under which they are reared, a significant part of a dog's life that may be spent in kennels with restricted social contacts, and risks of neglect and poor veterinary care once their racing careers are over...[W]e also did not find any evidence that the industry was prepared to make the radical changes that would be required to achieve improved dog welfare" (page 23). All of these problems have been well-documented around the world over several years.

It should be noted that a Scottish greyhound's life does not typically begin in Scotland but rather in Ireland, where over 80% of UK-based greyhounds are whelped. As part of its breeding enterprise and according to public reports, Irish greyhound breeders kill approximately 6,000 unwanted racers each year, sometimes by surrendering them to knackeries where they are brutally slaughtered. Therefore, it cannot be ignored that any continuation of dog racing in Scotland helps perpetuate the cycle of overbreeding and killing in the Emerald Isle. Shrinking the market on this despicable abuse of innocent dogs is an important positive step that the Scottish Parliament can, and should, take at this time.

Q2 Do you agree with the petition which calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland? Please explain your reasons for your answer.

Yes, we believe a prohibition on greyhound racing in Scotland is both timely and appropriate. A new Panelbase survey shows that 60% of the population would like Parliament to take this step while only 20%

would oppose. From start to finish, greyhound racing is an enterprise built on the suffering of dogs. The SAWC report rightfully concludes, “[W]e are not convinced that any of the current proposed measures can safeguard greyhound welfare appropriately” (page 24).

The SAWC findings are only the most recent official recommendation against dog racing. We encourage the RAI Committee to look at the history and negative movement with respect to this activity across the globe. In particular, we hope you will take note of the experience of South Africa. Despite repeated attempts by greyhound breeders and their allies beginning in the 1990s to convince the government that dog racing should be legalized, dog racing remains verboten in this country. South Africa spent large sums of money on multiple reviews and public consultancies, always reaching the conclusion that greyhound gambling should not be legalized, citing humane, economic and social grounds. The 2010 report by the five-member Gambling Review Commission was particularly robust and involved visits to dog tracks and meetings with experts around the world, including the President of this organization. The team of lawyers and academics appointed by the Department of Trade and Industry concluded that dog racing would not be an asset to the country and recommended against it:

“Recommendation

- There is significant popular opposition to greyhound racing and legitimate concerns about animal welfare.
- The industry is unlikely to generate significant revenues.
- In order to become successful, greyhound racing would have to stimulate demand for a new gambling product, which is at odds with the philosophy behind the controlled rollout of gambling in South Africa ...”

Gambling Review Commission “Review of the South African gambling industry and its regulation” (2010) 150-1, available at <https://static.pmg.org.za/docs/110829gambling-review.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2023)

Jamaica and the Philippines also rejected proposals to legalize dog racing in 2009 and 2010 respectively, and tracks in Macau and Vietnam and all across the United States (where commercial dog racing was invented in 1919) are closing for lack of interest, competition from other forms of gambling and the cancellation of licenses by government regulators. The trend is to end and outlaw dog racing and not to authorize this antiquated activity.

Q3 Do you agree with the recommendations of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report? Please explain your reasons for your answer.

We applaud the thorough approach and findings of fact contained in the SAWC report. The Commission found that greyhounds have poorer welfare than other dogs, acknowledged that relinquished greyhounds arrive in poor condition at rescue centers, and determined that racing inexorably puts dogs at risk of injury and death, with no effective measures to safeguard against these inherent harms.

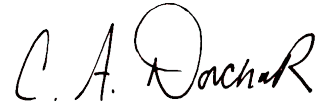
We are concerned, however, that the SAWC report speaks of a phase-out of 3-5 years at the decaying and unregulated Thornton Stadium. Such a long wind down guarantees that greyhounds alive now will continue to suffer, and that other dogs will be bred and hurt for the duration. In this sense, the factual findings of the report do not match its recommendations. On a related note, the recommendation for a veterinary presence while greyhound racing is yet allowed is a good one, but should not be seen as a substitute for making the right decision to outlaw all forms of dog racing now.

Finally, we would point out that this debate is not occurring in a vacuum. As greyhound racing continues to end in other places, Scotland becomes more and more of a magnet for greyhound breeders and other

proponents of this cruel enterprise. We ask that Holyrood take the definitive step of ordering a quick phase-out of dog racing now.

I would be happy to expand on this submission in the form of oral evidence at any time. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. A. Dorchak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "D" and "R".

Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.
President