Thousands of dogs are injured at racetracks each year

At American dog tracks, greyhounds routinely suffer serious injuries. From 2010 through 2019, a total of 10,977 greyhound injuries have been documented. The most commonly reported injury was a broken leg. Other injuries included head trauma, electrocution, and broken backs.

- At two West Virginia dog tracks, 6,999 greyhound injuries were reported from 2010 through 2019. During the same period, at least 271 dogs died or were euthanized.
- At two Texas dog tracks, 1,899 greyhound injuries were reported from 2010 through 2019, including at least 80 dogs that died or were euthanized.
- At Southland Greyhound Park in Arkansas, 1,114 greyhound injuries were reported from 2010 through 2019, including at least 13 dogs that died or were euthanized.
- At Iowa Greyhound Park, 400 greyhound injuries were reported from 2010 through 2019, including at least 18 dogs that died or were euthanized.
- In Florida where dog racing will be illegal as of January 1, 2021, three tracks remain operational. Of these, only one track began reporting greyhound injuries in May 2017: Sanford Orlando Kennel Club.
- At the Sanford Orlando Kennel Club, 165 greyhound injuries were reported from May 2017 through December 2019, including at least ten dogs that died or were euthanized.

Greyhounds also suffer injuries in unofficial schooling races and training activities, but these injuries are not always reported on state injury forms.

Injury reports document greyhounds who suffered and died

At least 429 racing greyhounds have died between 2010 and 2019. For example:

- On October 11, 2018, 23-month-old black male Arkans GL Koopa collapsed during a race at Southland Greyhound Park and was pronounced dead on arrival at the veterinarian’s office.
- A 17-month-old black greyhound named Tali Cougar was euthanized after breaking his radius and ulna during a race at Mardi Gras Racetrack in West Virginia on December 23, 2018.
- On April 30, 2017 a one-and-a-half-year-old white and blue brindle greyhound named Ub Big Boy was euthanized after breaking his right front leg during a race at Dubuque Greyhound Park in Iowa.
Academic research on track design and condition

Several scholarly studies have examined the impact of track design and condition on racing greyhound injuries.

- A study of five greyhound tracks in Wisconsin found that speed, race distance, and track turns all had an effect on orthopedic injury rates. Specifically, researchers found that race distances of 7/16 and 3/16 mile had the greatest incident of injury and concluded that longer races may lead to injuries if a dog were not properly trained for such distance.\(^{10}\)

  The first turn was the most likely location where a dog suffered an injury, which researchers did not find surprising due to the “speed and congestion” at that point in the track.\(^{11}\)

  The track with the greatest number of injuries in the study differed from the other tracks in that it had steeper banks in its turns and a small turning radius in the second turn, suggesting these track design features contributed to its injury rate.\(^{12}\)

- Researchers in the United Kingdom concluded that “changes in track maintenance, aimed at keeping track condition (going) slower, may reduce injury rate with consequent benefit to the welfare of racing greyhounds.”\(^{13}\)

- Researchers from Massey University in New Zealand conducted a five-year study and found that injuries were a significant contributor to the end of dogs’ racing careers:

  “We identified that hock injuries were the single most important cause of catastrophic failure and dog loss. The combination of training practices, questionable feeding practices, and the suspicion of stress induced fractures was also a significant cause of dog loss.”\(^{14}\)

The racing industry uses misleading information to minimize greyhound injuries

The industry compares the rate of injuries to the number of “starts,” the total number of times a greyhound starts a race. In using this metric, the industry counts the same dogs repeatedly, creating the impression that a much larger number of dogs are competing than actually are.\(^{15}\) As a result, they are able to claim that the injury risk individual dogs face is lower than it actually is.

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1. Dr. Lori Bohenko, Wheeling Island Racetrack Veterinary Report, (Charleston WV: West Virginia Racing Commission, 2010-2019); Dr. Mark D. Webster, Veterinary emergencies, scratches, and racers inactivated due to track injuries at Mardi Gras Casino & Resort (Charleston WV: West Virginia Racing Commission, 2010-2019); analysis by GREY2K USA (This analysis does not include eight months of injury data that GREY2K USA was unable to obtain from the West Virginia Racing Commission).
2. Ibid.
3. Texas Racing Commission, Gulf Greyhound Park Injury Reports (Austin, TX: 2010-2019); Texas Racing Commission, Valley Track Injury Reports (Austin, TX: 2016-2017); analysis by GREY2K USA
5. Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission, Dubuque Greyhound Park Mishap Reports (Des Moines, IA: 2010-2015); Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission, The Iowa Greyhound Park Mishap Reports (Des Moines, IA: 2015-2019); analysis by GREY2K USA
6. Seminole County Animal Services Department, Sanford-Orlando Greyhound Track Incident Reports (Seminole County, FL: 2017-2019); analysis by GREY2K USA
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.