

# Racing Greyhounds Suffer Serious Injuries



## Thousands of dogs are injured at racetracks each year

At American dog tracks, greyhounds routinely suffer serious injuries. From 2010 through 2021, a total of 12,951 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, 8,083 greyhound injuries were reported from 2010 through 2021.<sup>1</sup> During the same period, at least 289 dogs died or were destroyed.<sup>2</sup>
- In Texas where dog racing is no longer active, 1,928 greyhound injuries were reported from 2010 through 2020 at two dog tracks, including at least 80 dogs that died or were destroyed.<sup>3</sup>
- At Southland Greyhound Park in Arkansas, 1,295 greyhound injuries were reported from 2010 through 2021, including at least 13 dogs that died or were destroyed.<sup>4</sup>
- In Iowa where dog racing is no longer active, 482 greyhound injuries were reported at Iowa Greyhound Park from 2010 through 2021, including at least 21 dogs that died or were destroyed.<sup>5</sup>
- In Florida, only one track began reporting greyhound injuries in May 2017: Sanford Orlando Kennel Club. At the Sanford Orlando Kennel Club, 169 greyhound injuries were reported from May 2017 through March 2020, including at least eleven dogs that died or were destroyed.<sup>6</sup>



Holly was injured while racing in the U.S.

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 1,045 racing greyhounds have died between 2010 and 2021. 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.<sup>7</sup>
- 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.<sup>8</sup>
- On April 30, 2017 a one-and-a-half-year-old white and blue brindle greyhound named Ub Big Boy was destroyed after breaking his right front leg during a race at Dubuque Greyhound Park in Iowa.<sup>9</sup>

# 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 contributed to orthopedic injury rates. Specifically, researchers found that race distances of 7/16 and 3/16 mile had the greatest incidence of injury and concluded that longer races may lead to injuries if a dog were not properly trained for such distance.<sup>10</sup>

The first turn was the most likely point at which a dog suffered an injury, which researchers did not find surprising due to the “speed and congestion” at that point in the track.<sup>11</sup>

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 the greyhound injury rate.<sup>12</sup>

- 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.”<sup>13</sup>
- 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.”<sup>14</sup>

## 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 is entered into 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.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, this is a strategic technique to downplay the risk each individual dog faces.

*Last Updated on May 12, 2022*

- 1 Dr. Lori Bohenko, Wheeling Island Racetrack Veterinary Report, (Charleston WV: West Virginia Racing Commission, 2010-2021); 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, 2010-2021); 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: 2010-2020); Texas Racing Commission, Valley Track Injury Reports (Austin, TX: 2016-2017); analysis by GREY2K USA
- 4 Arkansas State Racing Commission, Southland Injury Report (West Memphis, AR: 2010); Arkansas State Racing Commission, Injuries 2011-2021 (West Memphis, AR: 2011-2021); analysis by GREY2K USA.
- 5 Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission, Dubuque Greyhound Park Mishap Reports (Des Moines, IA: 2010-2021); 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 (Sanford, FL: 2017-2020); analysis by GREY2K USA
- 7 Arkansas State Racing Commission, Injuries 2018 (West Memphis, AR: Arkansas State Racing Commission, November 28, 2018); “Pedigree of Arkans GL Koopa,” Greyhound-Data, <http://www.greyhound-data.com/d?i=2303862> (accessed April 3, 2019).
- 8 “Pedigree of Tali Cougar,” Greyhound-Data, <http://www.greyhound-data.com/d?i=2331549> (accessed April 3, 2019); Dr. Mark D. Webster, Veterinary emergencies, scratches, and racers inactivated due to track injuries at Mardi Gras Casino & Resort during December 2018, West Virginia Racing Commission (Charleston WV: January 4, 2019).
- 9 “Pedigree of Ub Big Boy,” Greyhound-Data, <http://www.greyhound-data.com/d?i=2243056> (accessed April 3, 2019); Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission, The Iowa Greyhound Park Mishap Report, IA: 2017).
- 10 G.K. Sicard, K. Short and P.A. Manley, “A survey of injuries at five greyhound racing tracks,” Journal of Small Animal Practice 40 (1999): 428-32
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Joanne Iddon, Richard H. Lockyer and Stephen P. Freen, “The effect of season and track condition on injury rate in racing greyhounds,” Journal of Small Animal Practice (2014). This article was an early view, meaning it was an “Online Version of Record published before inclusion in an issue.”
- 14 Nick Cave, Elwyn Firth and Devon Thompson, “Does the asymmetric modeling of the Central Tarsal Bone in racing greyhounds occur rapidly during training, or develop during the racing career?”, Massey University, <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/College%20of%20Sciences/IVABS/Equine%20Trust/NZRB7.pdf?214D385DFBDA4D1858E73E3DCE2B26C1> (accessed June 4, 2014).
- 15 Sally Briggs, “Greyhound racing opponents distort facts,” Galveston County Daily News, March 27, 2013, [http://www.galvestondailynews.com/opinion/guest\\_columns/article\\_c7246896-969a-11e2-92ed-001a4bcf6878.html?success=2](http://www.galvestondailynews.com/opinion/guest_columns/article_c7246896-969a-11e2-92ed-001a4bcf6878.html?success=2) (accessed June 4, 2014).