

Just Say No to Dog Racing

Nine States in the U.S. Still Exploit Greyhounds

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In the 1890s, greyhound races were a popular pastime in Los Angeles. More than 2,000 spectators would watch as the dogs chased a terrified, live jackrabbit around a 40-acre fenced-in field. In addition to the dogs that were consistently injured during the race, according to an article in the *Los Angeles Times* at that time, if the rabbit wasn't dead by the end of the race, someone killed it by stomping on its skull. Thankfully, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals stepped in and by 1899 the races were declared illegal under state law.

Today greyhound racing still occurs in the U.S., albeit without the live jackrabbit. The greyhound rescue group [GREY2K USA](#) claims there are currently nine states that operate greyhound tracks: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Rhode Island, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The state of Florida is the worst offender with 13 tracks for greyhound racing. This coming weekend is International Greyhound Memorial Weekend, and should be used as a time to educate others about the cruelty of the greyhound racing industry.

Similar to horse racing and the Iditarod, greyhound racing is an industry that exists solely for the entertainment of humans, at the expense of animals. Tens of thousands of greyhounds are bred annually in an attempt to create the fastest dogs. They are then "culled" if they are determined unable to become fast runners. According to the Humane Society of the United States, in 2003 alone, an estimated 5,000 greyhounds were euthanized simply because they couldn't run fast enough.

While the fastest greyhounds escape being put to sleep, they are destined to a life of continuous suffering. At the track, they are confined to small cages, stacked in warehouse style kennels, with barely enough room to stand up and turn around. During races, they can suffer from traumatic injuries including broken legs, cardiac arrest, spinal cord paralysis, and/or broken necks. In 2008, there were over 450 reported injuries at the Phoenix track, according to GREY2K USA. The injuries ranged from minor sprains to career-ending wounds, such as a broken leg. Twenty-five dogs died or were put to death because of their injuries.

During their racing career, greyhounds typically have little human contact. One member of the Connecticut Greyhound Adoption Group stated: "There is no other dog out there that has been through what a retired greyhound has been through. They don't know what being a pet is all about. They don't know how to use stairs; they've never seen windows; they're not used to being petted; they're used to having a job. It's like having a puppy that's full-grown." Personally, I have witnessed greyhounds that have had a hard time learning to "sit"; they were trained so hard to race, that they never learned to relax.

Aside from cruelty to greyhounds, many members of the greyhound racing industry engage in cruelty to smaller animals. Some believe that training dogs with live animals, such as rabbits and guinea pigs, allow them to run faster during competition. GREY2K USA reports: "In 2002, a greyhound breeder and owner had his state license suspended after he was caught using domestic rabbits to train his dogs. At least 180 rabbits were found at his kennel in rural Arizona."

Thankfully, as awareness to the plight of greyhounds increases, groups have come to the rescue to help adopt retired greyhounds into loving homes. There's the [National Greyhound Adoption Program](#), [Greyhound Rescue and Adoption](#), [USA Defenders of Greyhounds](#), and many more.

However, adoption is only one piece of the puzzle. Like any other breed of dog, greyhounds should be protected. Dog racing needs to be outlawed nationwide to prevent the suffering these poor animals endure.

Here's what you can do to help:

- Don't attend greyhound races or bet on dog racing; encourage others to do the same.
- If you live in one of the nine states that operate greyhound tracks, write to your state officials to let them know you oppose greyhound racing.
- Consider adopting a retired greyhound.
- Celebrate International Greyhound Memorial Weekend by helping educate others about greyhound racing. Together we can all make a difference in the lives of animals. ■