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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report on greyhound racing in Wisconsin includes information on humane and economic issues. All information is specific to Wisconsin, recent, and was obtained from credible sources such as state records or mainstream news reports.

As the data is examined, some basic facts emerge:

Confinement

- At Wisconsin dog tracks, greyhounds were kept in warehouse style kennels in rows of stacked cages
- Shredded paper or carpet remnants were used as bedding
- Greyhounds were confined in their cages for up to 22 hours per day
- Large greyhounds could not fully stand erect in the dog track cages used in Wisconsin
- This system of confined housing was used because Wisconsin dog tracks required a large number of greyhounds to operate
- Because greyhounds were extensively confined, a transition period was often necessary before they could be made available for adoption

Injuries

- 1,320 greyhound injuries were reported at Wisconsin dog tracks between January 2006 and April 2009
- Many reported injuries were serious, including dogs that suffered broken legs and spinal injuries
- A state veterinarian refused to approve the racetrack surface at Dairyland in 2008 due to poor track conditions
- A greyhound kennel owner left the industry in 2008 partly due to the high number of injuries at Dairyland

Gidget raced at Geneva Lakes Kennel Club in Delavan
(Photography by Karen Joncas)
Dying Industry

- By 1994, four of five Wisconsin dog tracks showed a loss
- Between 2004 and 2009, gambling on greyhound racing in Wisconsin decreased by 61%
- A Dairyland Greyhound Park executive publicly acknowledged that dog racing is no longer viable
- If greyhound racing is reintroduced in Wisconsin, it could cause the state to lose money

Other Issues

- Greyhounds suffered from various ailments at Wisconsin dog tracks including wounds from dog fights, vomiting, stomach bloat, frequent ear infections and skin infections
- At least one documented case of greyhound neglect occurred in Wisconsin
- Dairyland Greyhound Park closed for four weeks in 2005 after nearly 1,000 greyhounds were infected with a form of horse flu
- The Department of Agriculture investigated the death of six greyhounds at Dairyland Greyhound Park in 2009, including four dogs that bled to death
- At least one dog died while being transported to another state from a Wisconsin greyhound track in 2006
- Greyhounds competed in extreme weather conditions in Wisconsin, on the hottest days of summer and the coldest days of winter
Greyhound racing was legalized in Wisconsin in 1987. In 1990, four dog tracks opened in the state, followed by a fifth in 1991. The tracks were initially successful, but by 1994 four of the five dog tracks reported losses.

Fox Valley Greyhound Park in Kaukauna was the first to fold, closing in 1993 less than three years after its opening. The track lost $1.3 million in 1991 and $3.4 million in 1992, and was forced to file for bankruptcy in January 1993.

Wisconsin Dells Greyhound Park in Lake Delton, which was the state’s first greyhound racetrack, closed in 1996 under pressure from mounting financial losses. The track lost $1.2 million in the year prior to its closing.

St. Croix Meadows Greyhound Racing Park in Hudson shut down in August of 2001 after a decade of declining attendance and losses estimated at over $32 million, including $25 million from 1990 to 1996 alone.

Geneva Lakes Kennel Club in Delavan closed in 2005 after sixteen years of operation. In its final year it lost an estimated $3.5 million.

The state’s final dog track, Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha, opened on June 20, 1990. It was successful for a few years, but interest quickly waned. It closed permanently on December 31, 2009. In its final seven years, it lost an estimated $17 million.

Thousands of greyhounds competed at Wisconsin dog tracks. They began their racing careers at approximately 18 months of age, and were generally retired by the age of five.

2 GREY2K USA, Fact Sheet on the History of Greyhound Racing in Wisconsin (last updated on October 22, 2009).
3 Walker.
4 GREY2K USA.
5 GREY2K USA.
6 GREY2K USA.
8 Michael Burke, Dairyland Greyhound Park to be shut down, Racine Journal Times, November 10, 2009.
9 Walker.
10 Walker.
Greyhounds were confined for up to 22 hours per day at Wisconsin dog tracks

When dog racing existed in Wisconsin, thousands of greyhounds endured lives of confinement, kept in warehouse style kennels in rows of stacked cages. According to greyhound adoption advocates, shredded paper or carpet remnants were used as bedding.\textsuperscript{12}

Greyhounds were confined perpetually in these cages with two exceptions:

1. A few times per month, greyhounds were removed from their cages and taken to the racetrack to compete, where they were similarly confined before racing.

2. A few times per day, greyhounds were “turned out” in a large group and allowed to relieve themselves. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, these turn-outs amounted to a total time of 2-3 hours per day.\textsuperscript{13}

In summary, except on race days greyhounds at Wisconsin dog tracks were confined for 21 to 22 hours per day.

Large greyhounds could not fully stand erect in their cages

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, the cages that were used at commercial dog tracks in Wisconsin measured 36 inches wide, by 48 inches deep, by 34 inches high.\textsuperscript{14}

According to the American Greyhound Council, greyhounds stand between 23 inches and 30 inches tall at the shoulder, and weigh between 50 and 85 pounds.\textsuperscript{15} Large greyhounds cannot fully stand erect in the cages that were used at Wisconsin racetracks.

This system of confined housing was used because the Wisconsin dog tracks required a large number of dogs in order to operate. For example, as many as 1,000 greyhounds were required to operate the Geneva Lakes Kennel Club.\textsuperscript{16}

Because they were confined, greyhounds required a transition period before being adopted

Because racing greyhounds were extensively confined, a transition period was often necessary before they could be made available for adoption. Pam Niemuth, who ran the adoption center at Geneva Lakes Kennel Club, spoke publicly about this transition period in 2005:

\textsuperscript{12} Darby Prater, \textit{Couple helping greyhounds find homes}, Battle Creek Enquirer, December 5, 2009.
\textsuperscript{13} Mark Saunders, Deputy Legal Counsel, Wisconsin Department of Administration, correspondence to GREY2K USA dated July 16, 2007 (on file with author).
\textsuperscript{14} Saunders.
\textsuperscript{15} American Greyhound Council, \textit{Frequently Asked Questions About Greyhound Pets}, online at http://www.agcouncil.com/node/17 (last visited on December 8, 2010).
\textsuperscript{16} George Hesselberg, \textit{Her job: find homes for 1,000 greyhounds}, Wisconsin State Journal, September 19, 2005.
SECTION 2.

Confinement

“They have been socialized to race. So they have been involved with different people, handlers, who probably haven’t had as much time to work with them personally. So (the dogs) don’t know what a vacuum cleaner is, or how to go up and down stairs, because they don’t come in contact with those things ... many have never heard a telephone ring, or seen a mirror.”17

Similar public comments were made in 2008 by Ellen Paulus, president of the Wisconsin Chapter of Greyhound Pets of America:

“They have lived in a cage, so they do things like bark at mirrors because they’ve never seen themselves before.”18

17 Hesselberg.
18 John Krerowicz, Old greyhounds can be taught new tricks, with patience and perspective, Kenosha News, December 26, 2008.
More than 1,300 greyhound injuries were reported in Wisconsin in the last four years of dog racing

According to state records, 1,320 greyhound injuries were reported in Wisconsin between 2006 and April 2009.\textsuperscript{19} All of these injuries occurred at Dairyland Greyhound Park.\textsuperscript{20}

Specifically, 388 greyhound injuries were reported in 2006,\textsuperscript{21} 462 injuries were reported in 2007,\textsuperscript{22} 361 injuries were reported in 2008,\textsuperscript{23} and 119 injuries were reported through April 2009.\textsuperscript{24}

This averages to 32 injuries per month in 2006, nearly 40 injuries per month in 2007, and 30 injuries per month for 2008 and 2009.

Many reported greyhound injuries were serious

The most common injuries reported during this period were broken legs. Between 2007 and 2009, 198 broken legs were reported, more than one-fifth of all reported injuries.\textsuperscript{25} Other reported injuries included broken necks, lacerations, ruptures, severed tails, muscle-related injuries, amputations, dislocations, broken ankles, seizures and paralysis.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{19} Wisconsin Department of Administration, records produced May 20, 2009 (on file with author).
\textsuperscript{20} Wisconsin Department of Administration.
\textsuperscript{22} Walker.
\textsuperscript{23} Wisconsin Department of Administration.
\textsuperscript{24} Wisconsin Department of Administration.
\textsuperscript{25} Wisconsin Department of Administration (data on 2006 broken legs were not available).
\textsuperscript{26} Wisconsin Department of Administration.
SECTION 3.

Injuries

The common frequency of broken legs was publicly acknowledged in 2009 by Kari Swanson of Midwest Greyhound Adoption, which assisted in finding homes for greyhounds that had raced at Dairyland:

"About 80 percent of the dogs we take in from the track have broken legs."27

Many reported injuries were fatal, including Tristar Chloe who fell into the rail, Cals Banana Man who was run over by three other dogs and Mustang McNabb who tripped and broke his neck leaving the starting box.28 In 2008, at least fifteen greyhounds died at Dairyland Greyhound Park.29

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27 WISN TV News, Dog track not bringing in enough spectators, October 12, 2009.
28 Wisconsin Department of Administration.
In December 2008, state veterinarian Jennifer Barker e-mailed her supervisors at the Division of Gaming to inform them that she could not approve of the track surface for racing. Despite her concern, races were held as scheduled that night. In a subsequent interview with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Barker explained her concerns:

“I went back to the area, and I thought the surface was very hard ... as a veterinarian, my sole purpose is to look after the greyhounds, and I didn’t feel it was safe.”

A greyhound kennel owner left the industry in part due to the high number of injuries at Dairyland

In 2008, greyhound kennel owner Bob Ryan asked Dairyland Greyhound Park to be relieved of his contract with the track. He cited financial losses and stated that the high number of greyhound injuries at the track bothered him.
Between 2004 and 2009, gambling on dog racing in Wisconsin declined by 61%

Within a few years of opening, four of the five Wisconsin dog tracks showed a loss. This trend continued until dog racing ended in 2010, and between 2004 and 2009 the amount gambled in the state on greyhound races decreased by 61%.

Dairyland executive publicly acknowledged that greyhound racing is no longer viable

Even a top racetrack executive publicly acknowledged that dog racing is no longer viable. Dairyland executive vice president Roy Berger voiced this reality in a November 2009 news report:

“The dog racing industry has fallen apart ... there's no market for it. People have shown time and time again they want to push buttons or pull levers. Pari mutal tracks are dead.”

Berger was even more blunt in assessing the viability of greyhound racing in a December 2009 news report:

“Stand-alone greyhound tracks have gone the way of pay phones and eight-track cassettes.”

Similarly, when Geneva Lakes Kennel Club closed in 2005, chief steward Dan Subach with the state Division of Gaming called the closure “inevitable.”

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33 Walker.
34 Elisabeth Dieterich, Assistant Legal Counsel, Wisconsin Department of Administration, correspondence to GREY2K USA dated September 15, 2010 (on file with author).
35 Katie Gardner, Last days at Kenosha’s Dairyland, WBEZ radio, November 22, 2009.
37 Hesselberg.
If greyhound racing is reintroduced, it could cause the state to lose money

In the final full fiscal year that greyhound racing existed, the state barely broke even on the activity.\(^{38}\)

For the year ending June 30, 2008 the state received $1.33 million in revenue from greyhound racing while spending $1.20 million regulating the activity. This included funds the state spent on salaries and fringe benefits, supplies, and services. The state had six full-time employees working directly to regulate greyhound racing, and eleven limited-term employees.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{39}\) Walker.
Greyhounds suffered from various ailments at Wisconsin dog tracks

While greyhound racing existed in the state, the Division of Racing collected and published information about the treatment of racing dogs for various ailments. Reported medical issues included wounds from dog fights, vomiting, stomach bloat, frequent ear infections, and skin infections. For example, Skydive Donny was euthanized because of an abdominal hemorrhage and PW’s Callisto was found dead in her cage with a “gastric torsion.”

At least one documented case of greyhound neglect occurred in Wisconsin

In 2005, a Delavan greyhound trainer and kennel operator was fined $2,000 and his license was suspended for 90 days after dogs in his control were “found to have been neglected and in an unacceptable condition with feces in their crates, urine-soaked bedding and food pans left from (the) previous day.” The trainer was initially fined only $200, but was disciplined further when a follow-up inspection showed that the conditions were still unsatisfactory.

Racetrack closes after nearly 1,000 greyhounds are infected with form of horse flu

Dairyland Greyhound Park was forced to close for four weeks in April 2005 after 950 greyhounds became ill with a form of canine influenza. After approximately a dozen dogs began coughing, the symptoms spread rapidly through the track kennel compound. It was later determined that the illness was a form of horse flu that had never before jumped species.

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40 Wisconsin Department of Administration.
41 Wisconsin Department of Administration.
42 George Hesselberg, Greyhound trainer may lose his license, Wisconsin State Journal, April 9, 2005.
43 Darryl Enriquez, Dog disease likely to spread, vet warns, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, September 23, 2005.
44 Enriquez.
45 Rob Stein, Dog flu jumped from horses, Washington Post, September 27, 2005.
**Department of Agriculture investigates death of six greyhounds at Dairyland Greyhound Park**

In 2009, the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection joined the Wisconsin Division of Gaming to investigate the death of six greyhounds at Dairyland Greyhound Park. Four of the dogs bled to death, according to state records. As part of the investigation, the Department of Agriculture set up a Toxic Response Team and took samples of the food the dogs were eating.\(^{46}\)

**Greyhound haul leads to death of dog**

Because greyhounds often compete at multiple racetracks during their career, dogs are frequently hauled long distances. At least one dog died during transport to another state from a Wisconsin greyhound track.

In 2006, a greyhound trainer lost his state license after a dog in his control died while being hauled from Dairyland Greyhound Park to West Virginia.\(^{47}\) At least three dogs suffered from heat exhaustion during the trip, and a greyhound named Kambrie Rose died.\(^{48}\)

The trainer claimed that he intended to take multiple dogs to West Virginia to be adopted, and was facing a deadline from unidentified track officials to remove the dogs from the track.\(^{49}\) He further claimed that he did not know where to take the greyhounds because he wanted to place the dogs, but “not with an anti-racing group.”\(^{50}\)

**Greyhounds raced in extreme weather conditions**

According to a 2008 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel news report, weather conditions were one reason why such a large number of greyhounds suffered broken legs at Dairyland Greyhound Park.\(^{51}\) Greyhounds ran year-round at the track,\(^{52}\) and competed on the hottest days of summer and the coldest days of winter.

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48 Hesselberg.
49 Hesselberg.
50 Hesselberg.
52 Walker.
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19. WBEZ Radio  Last days at Kenosha’s Dairyland  p. 49
20. The Enquirer  Couple helping greyhounds find homes  p. 51
21. Chicago Tribune  Greyhounds going up for adoption as Kenosha dog track closes  p. 53
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Greyhound group asks state to investigate Dairyland

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. - A California group dedicated to helping greyhounds filed a request with state officials Friday to investigate the racing conditions at Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha County.

The Greyhound Protection League filed the request following the death of a greyhound at the track this week. The group said in a letter to gaming officials it has concerns over the injury rates at the facility and believes the racing conditions there are dangerous.

Track general manager Bill Apgar said the complaint was baseless.

"We're proud of our safety record," he said. "They can say what they want to say. We run a safe operation, and we run a safe race track."

Tom Solberg, spokesman for the state Department of Administration, said the state could not comment on the allegations. But he said the Division of Gaming has begun a review in response to the letter. He said the agency will check track procedures and equipment to gauge if any corrective action was needed.

Apgar said the incident that resulted in the dog's death Wednesday was a "freak accident." Two dogs collided in a turn during a race. One of the dogs became disoriented and ended up in a rail used to power the lure around the track that the dogs chase. The dog was euthanized after it was examined by the track veterinarian. The second dog involved in the crash broke a leg. It was treated and has now been put up for adoption.

Solberg said track personnel responded compassionately and professionally.

"It doesn't appear that anyone was at fault in this case. It was just a tragic accident," Solberg said.
Greyhound Trainer May Lose His License

The Delavan Man’s License Was Suspended After His Dogs Were Found To Have Been Neglected.

Wisconsin State Journal

Saturday, April 9, 2005
George Hesselberg Wisconsin State Journal

State gambling officials have suspended and recommend revoking the license of a Delavan greyhound trainer and kennel operator.

John Jachimowski, who supplies dogs from his JaTa Kennels to the Geneva Lakes Greyhound Track in Delavan, was fined $2,000 and had his license suspended for 90 days, beginning Feb. 5, according to Division of Gaming officials.

A council of “stewards” made the determination after inspectors in January examined conditions in an “overflow kennel” at the track. The state maintains offices at the Delavan track, a year-round facility, and at the Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha, the two remaining dog tracks in Wisconsin.

The dogs were “found to have been neglected and in an unacceptable condition with feces in their crates, urine-soaked bedding and food pans left from (the) previous day,” according to the inquiry.

“They fined him $200 and then went back a few days later and were still unsatisfied with the conditions, so fined him $2,000 and suspended him,” said Scott Larrivee, Department of Administration spokesman.

The recommendation for revocation, which is a lifetime ban, goes to the gaming division’s administrators and is pending, Larrivee said. The dogs were “taken over” by the track. A revocation can be appealed.

Jachimowski, licensed by the state since 2003, and as a kennel operator since December 2004, did not return phone messages left at his Delavan home.

At least one national greyhound protection group, GREY2K USA, based in Massachusetts, has been monitoring the state’s actions in Delavan, as it does at all of the greyhound tracks in the country.

“The Wisconsin (division of gaming) should be applauded, it is one of the best if not the best in dealing with these kinds of problems,” said Carey Theil, president of the nonprofit.
Theil's group is dedicated to stopping greyhound racing "because we believe this is an industry that is cruel and inhumane and should be outlawed," he said.

He blamed "wanton neglect" on "economic pressures that every kennel in the land is now facing."

Typically, a kennel houses up to 60 dogs at the track site, and a track can have 10 or more kennels providing dogs.

Larrivee said incidents of neglect at Wisconsin racetracks are "very rare," and "even one or two per year would be unusual."
Her job: Find homes for 1,000 greyhounds

GEORGE HESSELBERG ghesselberg@madison.com
September 19, 2005

DELAVAL - Pam Niemuth will soon be in charge of up to 1,000 refugees, some only 2 years old, all incapable of opening a can of food by themselves.

Niemuth runs the Geneva Lakes Greyhound Track adoption center, and her leash on the dogs' lives is getting shorter. The track will close Nov. 6.

"That's the last day of live racing, but I am told the adoption program will be in operation until the end of the year," she said.

"We probably have about 900 to 1,000 dogs at the track right now," she said last week.

Some of the dogs will go to other tracks to continue their racing careers, others will go to outside adoption groups and many will go through Niemuth's program. The adoption fee is $150, which covers the costs of spaying or neutering the animal, shots, and other medical costs.

Niemuth, who has adopted three greyhounds, has been working with the dogs since 1990 and for the adoption program since last January. In those eight months, she has placed nearly 70 dogs.

Greyhounds can live between 12 and 15 years, but most of the ones up for adoption are between 2 and 5 years old, she said. Most are good with children and other animals, she said.

She keeps a group of 18 to 20 dogs in the adoption kennel, where "they get their vet work done and we assess their personalities."

The one quality many racing greyhounds lack - which can be developed - is socialization, she said.

"They have been socialized to race. So they have been involved with different people, handlers, who probably haven't had as much time to work with them personally. So (the dogs) don't know what a vacuum cleaner is, or how to go up and down stairs, because they don't come in contact with those things," said Niemuth.

"Many have never heard a telephone ring, or seen a mirror," she said.
In a letter from Division of Gaming supervisor Richard Pedersen, adoption groups have been assured that every greyhound associated with Geneva Lakes will be tracked.

"We are currently in the process of identifying every greyhound in the compound enabling us to track the movement of each dog," he wrote in response to a letter of concern from the Greyhound Protection League.

Susan Netboy, the league’s president, said accountability has been a problem in past dog track closings, which is why her group and others are making their concern known early.

"If we did not do that, there would be dogs going out the back door, undocumented, and that's a problem.

"The racing industry likes everyone to think that all the dogs will be sitting on sofas, but that has got to be an awful big sofa. We just don’t buy into that."

The American Greyhound Council, a pro-racing industry group, reports that “92 percent of registered greyhounds go back to the farm or to adoptive homes upon retirement.”

Netboy, however, said the dog adoption “market,” is saturated right now.

"The dogs will have to go further and further away to be absorbed."

Her group has requested that the state and tracks pay for hauling adopted dogs to new homes.

"That's what the dogs deserve. The point is that the track has made money off the dogs for years. It is payback time."
The greyhound blues

GEORGE HESSELBERG ghesselberg@madison.com
September 19, 2005

DELAVAL - At 1 p.m. Thursday, lure operator Craig Bowen released a large, cartoonish bone that zipped 200 yards on a rail around a figure-eight shaped lagoon before passing in front of a long box with a mesh metal wall.

Behind that mesh, eight sets of eyes focused momentarily on that speeding bone. The mesh wall sprang up and eight greyhound "dog athletes" began a muzzled 560-yard sprint after the lure.

None caught it, but "Ss Sugar Star," who will be 3 years old in February and who has won a total of $741.96 this year, came the closest, spending 31.11 seconds on the attempt. There were 298 people who watched from a space that can hold 7,000.

Another 3-year-old greyhound, which has won only $21.09 this year, was the slowest, in 32.59 seconds.

Her name is "Baby Why O Why."

Good question.

The Geneva Lakes Greyhound Track will close Nov. 6 after 16 years in business. In 1990, $54,065,236 was wagered there by the 662,341 people who went to the track. Last year, 155,870 bet $24,683,098. It will lose $3.5 million this year, according to an estimate filed with state officials by the track operators.

By the end of this year, the plans are, 800-plus dogs will be gone, many "petted out" or adopted, but most moved to other race tracks, including the Dairiland Greyhound Park in Kenosha. In a state that in 1987 legislatively and by popular vote embraced dog racing to the extent that five tracks were built, Dairiland and Geneva Lakes are the only ones remaining. Not even a track in Wisconsin Dells - where tourists have been shelling out money for curious entertainment for a long time - could survive.

While the Geneva Lakes greyhound refugees are on the watch-lists of dog-saving organizations around the country, the nearly 200 employees of the track are refugees of a different sort. Many, like betting- window attendant Judy Billing, 57, and racing secretary Mae Mohr, 35, have worked here since the park opened in 1990.
It's the only place Mohr has ever worked as an adult. She arrived here as a teen from New Hampshire working for a kennel that provided the "dog-athletes" for the races. By 1996, she was working for the track, not only moving up in the business to be in charge of racing, but moving up personally, too. The teenager who exercised dogs 16 years ago is now married and a mother of two.

Billing wonders where she will get health benefits.

She remembers when the track opened, when the grandstand was full, when police had to take over traffic control on Highway 50 just so the betting public could get in and get out.

"People win, people lose," she said, taking a smoke break from her betting window in a side room where pari-mutuel betting is allowed, adjacent to the Clubhouse.

Then she says it, what everyone here says:

"We could stay open, make money. Just add some poker rooms. Others do it, why can't we?"

Milt Roth, 69 is dapper, elfin, smiling, alert. The only nod to racing ostentation is a little gold on his wrist, nothing splashy. He paused for a chat. It was a Thursday so there was matinee racing at the track he manages, one of several the Florida native has worked for or directed over 45 years in the business.

Today, before a "crowd" of fewer than 300, the track is gleaming, inside and out. The large parking lot is so empty that a flock of geese has taken over a portion and an abandoned truck appears to have taken root near the kennels.

Anyone over 55 years old gets in for free on matinee weekdays. For everyone else, it costs a dollar. The track, in addition to paying the state a portion of its profits, also pays Walworth County and Delavan. Those municipalities charge Geneva Lakes 25 cents per head, so the track gives up half its admission at the gate. Even for the people who get in free, the track pays.

And pays.

The dogs run outside, year-round, so the track must be heated from October through April. Beneath the track is a web of glycol-filled heating pipes. "It costs me $18,000 a month just to heat the track," said Roth.

By law, the track must be open for at least 200 sessions annually.

"Just let me have 100 machines, that's all we need, we could keep the track open and make money."

He means video-game-like betting machines, similar to slot machines,
only the goal is to win a recorded race.

When the dog tracks opened in Wisconsin, there were few casinos for competition. The Wisconsin Dells track closed in 1996 and no one argued that Ho-Chunk operating three miles away was not a big reason for it.

Now, said Roth, casinos have expanded to the point where his track will be the fourth victim of that competition. Unfair, in his eyes, because "what is legal for them to use is illegal for me to use."

Right up there with the casino competition, Roth blames Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle for the demise of dog track racing. Doyle vetoed a provision that would have allowed those racing simulcast machines.

Doyle's office released this statement on that issue: "The Geneva Lakes facility has had financial difficulty for years. The video game machines are basically slot machines, which would, if installed, jeopardize millions of dollars in (Indian gambling) compact payments to the state. The governor's veto is not what caused closing of the track."

Paul Thompson, 64, of Oregon, and Jim Stefek, 78, of Delavan, both Navy veterans, sat together in a side room at Geneva Lakes' Clubhouse, surrounded by TVs showing horse and dog races. They were planning their bets for the matinee dog races. Stefek would be betting about $400 and Thompson, about $100.

"I always treat this as entertainment," said Thompson amiably, adding, "Generally, I lose."

Stefek has a season pass. This track, he said, "is pitiful."

"They've got to get the people here. Give free valet parking to senior citizens."

"What they need," he said, and Thompson nodded in agreement, "is poker rooms."

Geneva Lakes' sale has been rumored over the money-losing past.

Carey Theil, president of GREY2K USA, a national nonprofit greyhound protection group - and anti-dog racing group - that pays attention to details of dog-racing developments, has been watching Wisconsin.

Several years ago the track - owned by Chicago lawyer Robert Glick - was reported by the racing trade media to be a target for purchase by an Indian casino group for more than $35 million. That fell through.

Months ago, there were again ripples. "We don't know the whole story, but there may have been an attempt at some point to sell the facility, or part of the facility, or some of the land. It fell through," he said.

The track is in a highly desirable commercial location at the intersection
of Interstate 43 and Highway 50, just east of Delavan. Lake Geneva is nearby, and across the highway is a bustling shopping center with the requisite big-name “anchor” tenants and trendy franchises.

Roth, whose fatalistic pronouncements were widely reported when the closing was announced, showed a hint of coyness when asked last week about the chances of staying open, even without additional gambling options.

It’s true, he said, there have been some nibbles from potential purchasers since the closing announcements.

"The publicity, the stories in the papers, we’ve had a couple of calls," he said.

"I don’t think the building has any real other purpose. It’s not a multifunction building. Maybe for racing cars," he said.

Theil, of GREY2K USA, hopes it stays closed.

"The closure of Geneva Lakes is a victory for everyone in Wisconsin who cares about animals," said Theil.

"I also think it’s a sure sign that this industry is no longer economically viable," he added.

As for laying blame, Theil said: "Just the fact they are saying they need to close because the governor vetoed expansion of non-greyhound-racing gambling, well, that is also saying that greyhound racing is no longer making it in the gambling marketplace," he said.

With the closing of the facility - which Roth assures is in excellent condition - imminent, "there has to be a plan in place or you are going to have a disaster," said Theil.

Dan Subach has that plan.

Subach, a state employee since 1991, is the state Division of Gaming official - chief steward - keeping track of Geneva Lakes. There are three state employees at the track, and he has a 145-line printout outlining the various closing duties that need to be filled, all the way from timely layoff notices to turning off the electricity.

"The checklist has evolved since the first track closed," said Subach, who prefaced his description of a "successful closing" with "pardon the oxymoron."

The difference here is that, with three other tracks already closed, there are fewer options for transferring dogs and people.

"We have to have backup plans," he said. "If we can’t move a kennel, or they can’t move, what is our plan to make sure these dogs are cared for
and who is in charge of this?" he said.

There are 10 "kennels" and more than 800 dogs at Geneva Lakes, each kennel a separate independent business that provides racing dogs.

"There are two levels of dogs. Those just starting out, they don't know how good they will be. OK, if this greyhound has promise, it can go to this track. Those greyhounds will be moved to the appropriate track," Subach said.

"The other portion of the population are greyhounds that are either at the tail end of their career or not as successful, and they don't have as many options. There (are few) options to move." Those are the dogs that need to be "petted out," or adopted.

The two-legged workers at the track need to be taken care of, too. There are 183 employees, not including kennel employees, subcontractors and others, said Subach.

The state's Department of Workforce Development will be meeting with those workers to develop a job strategy.

"There are some preliminary discussions about possibly turning the track into something else, put it to use. There are commercial opportunities there," said Subach.

He doubts if the quality of racing and maintenance will suffer in the few weeks the track remains open.

"(The track owners) are asking their kennels to operate through Nov. 6, with the certain understanding in place that, 'We will help you out, when it is time to place your dogs; we will give your dogs a place to stay.' They also know that with some people, it is sometimes easier to find a job if they know there is a benefit to them racing through Nov. 6."

Subach said the closing was "inevitable. I look at the numbers and the trends and see that the pari-mutuel (betting) business has decreased. Given the status quo, I have seen three other tracks close for the same reason. There has to be a ceiling bottom, and this is it. Everyone cries uncle at a certain point, and this is it."

Steve Barham, who teaches at the University of Arizona's racetrack industry program, was executive director of the state of Oregon Racing Commission for 17 years.

Closing a racetrack is economics, he said, "and the economics boils down to the amount of money wagered. Wisconsin has a lot of Indian casinos, lots of competition for the gambling dollars. People make their choices with their dollars. When you have a facility that has a whole lot of people working there, having to pay purses and all those things, versus someone running a bunch of slot machines . . .
"And once you start out with 150 slots, all of a sudden, that grows into 1,000 slots."

Are dog racing tracks doomed?

"In some places. It's a tough business. If they can get slots, and turn it into a 'racino,' it may help them for a while. The problem with losing money is then you don't have a lot to invest in making the improvements," he said.
Dog disease likely to spread, vet warns

Canine flu infected 950 greyhounds at Dairyland Park in Kenosha

By DARRYL ENRIQUEZ
denriquez@journalsentinel.com

Posted: Sept. 23, 2005

A new canine disease that closed Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha for four weeks earlier this year will likely spread to domestic dogs and eventually infect wild canines such as coyotes and wolves, a top animal researcher predicted Friday.

The disease, a form of influenza, has killed dozens of dogs in six other states, but none died at Dairyland during an April and May outbreak that infected about 950 dogs, said Jenifer Barker, a veterinarian with the state Division of Gaming.

"We didn't lose one, and we're very proud of that," Barker said.

There is no evidence that the disease, first diagnosed last year at a Florida dog track, can be transmitted to humans or that it has spread outside of Dairyland, Barker said.

"The hardest part of this disease is convincing people that this is real," Barker said.

The School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has tracked the disease for more than a year.

"It's just a matter of time before the disease gets out into the general dog population and then into the wild canine population," said Ronald D. Schultz, a dean at the school.

The school surveyed kennels and shelters throughout the state this summer and found no incidents of infection other than at Dairyland, Schultz said.

"I think it bears out the fact of how well things were handled here in that it was contained here and dealt with here in a proper manner," said Bill Appgar, Dairyland general manager. "I think an excellent job was done here in the handling of these greyhounds."

Geneva Lakes Kennel Club escaped the outbreak, Schultz said.

Infections were mostly confined to dog tracks in Florida, Massachusetts, Arizona, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Texas and Iowa. The track in Jacksonville, Fla., lost two dozen greyhounds to the disease, and a track in Iowa lost more than a dozen, Barker said.

Other known outbreaks have happened at dog kennels in New York and New Jersey, Barker said.

Doesn't have to be reported

Detecting the frequency of canine influenza in Wisconsin is hampered because it is not a disease that must be reported to the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the agency that oversees the state veterinary office, said Donna Gilson, a department spokeswoman.

County and local health departments also do not monitor outbreaks of dog disease.
"We really don't have any eyes or ears out there, but when there's an outbreak we ultimately hear about it," she said.

Barker, who watches the health of Dairyland greyhounds, said she expected the disease would eventually arrive at the track because dog owners travel from track to track with their racing animals.

Dogs have no natural immunity to the influenza, which often is mistaken for kennel cough, another respiratory affliction, Schultz said. The disease is believed to be a mutated form of influenza that infects horses, he said.

Symptoms spread rapidly

When about a dozen dogs began coughing in late April at Dairyland, Barker began taking blood samples and treating them with fluids and medicines. The symptoms spread rapidly through the kennels, and 30 dogs spiked high fevers and came down with pneumonia, she said.

One dog had a temperature of over 106 degrees, which is 4 to 5 degrees above normal, she said.

Barker launched an intensive training program for Dairyland dog trainers on recognizing disease symptoms, which include fever, coughing, gagging and nasal drainage.

Schultz called the disease an "emerging virus" that will sweep through the canine population as the Parvo virus did in the late 1970s, killing thousands of dogs with untreatable diarrhea.
Greyhounds can't outrun hard truth

BY M. DANIEL GIBBARD
Chicago Tribune

DELAVAN, Wis. - The gates at Geneva Lakes Greyhound Track snap open and the dogs rush out in a blur of bobbing snouts and flying legs.

But their speed belies the truth: The dog racing industry in Wisconsin has ground nearly to a halt.

The Delavan track, one of two remaining in the state, closed Sunday after years of sliding attendance and wagering. More than 250 people are now out of jobs and as many greyhounds are homeless, track officials said.

The track's plight highlights Wisconsin's losing bet on five dog racing tracks, which officials approved in 1989. While Indian casinos, which followed shortly afterward, have thrived, Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha is the sole survivor among the tracks.

As business wound down, Geneva Lakes focused on finding homes for the sleek racers, a regular part of the industry as dogs retire.

In a typical year, the track adopts out about 200 dogs. But this time around, track officials and advocates are sounding the alarm because of the sheer volume of dogs that need to be adopted in a few months.

"We need adoption groups nationwide to pitch in, to help pick up some of these dogs," said Kathy Urzedowski of Greyhounds Only, a Chicago-area shelter and adoption agency. "We need people who have possibly thought about adopting a greyhound into their home to give it some really serious consideration."

Wisconsin does not allow euthanasia unless a greyhound is badly injured or sick, and it closely monitors the fate of the dogs through the state Division of Gaming. Dogs can begin running at 18 months and generally retire by age 5.

At the track's height, there were perhaps 1,000 racers in its kennels, Roth said, but that has probably dwindled to 850 or so, said Milt Roth, general manager of Geneva Lakes. About 600 will go to other tracks or to breeding farms, but 250 - mostly the oldest and slowest - will need new homes.

"The owners don't want to take them back for whatever reason," Roth said. "Some of them are not suitable for breeding or they aren't fast enough to go to another track. It's our moral obligation to help them out."

The Geneva Lakes track has been adopting out a dog a day for the past month, and by agreement with the state, its kennels will remain open until all the greyhounds are gone, said Pam Niemuth, who heads the track's adoption program.

Niemuth and assistant Tammi Smith get the dogs ready to become pets, including house-breaking them and walking them around a mock living room to get them acclimated to stairs and furniture. Adopters must pass a background check and pay $170, which covers neutering and all vaccinations.

Smith, 28, worked at the track since she was a teenager and will miss the dogs: Cool Run - whom she nicknamed Beaner - Keyocera, Jelly, Malikye, and hundreds more.

"It makes me want to cry," said the tattooed and tough-looking Smith. "If I sit and think about it for more than 40 seconds, I get real emotional. It tears my heart apart."

Perhaps surprisingly, greyhound lovers say, the dogs are not prone to tearing around homes or yards at top speed. In fact, the animals are so lazy in retirement they're known affectionately as 40-m.p.h. couch potatoes.
“The dogs really do make great pets,” Roth said. “They’re high-strung athletes when they’re athletes, but after that ... most of the time they just lie around and watch television.”

In 1989, Wisconsin legislators approved licenses for five greyhound tracks in an effort to boost state revenues.

Geneva Lakes, a $22 million state-of-the-art facility, opened with great fanfare on May 25, 1990. Nearly 5,000 people crowded in to watch, with then-Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson leading the VIP list.

In that first year, 662,000 spectators came to the track, and wagers totaled more than $58 million. But after peaking in 1991, the track, like others in the state, began to slide.

By 2004, attendance had dropped to 156,000 gamblers, and the handle, or wagering total, was $24 million. This year’s figures are down another 5 percent to 10 percent, Roth said, and the track expects to lose $3.3 million.

Roth blames state politics and Gov. Jim Doyle for the track’s demise.

In July, Doyle vetoed a bill that would have allowed dog tracks to have touch-screen video-simulcast machines on which bets can be placed on horse or dog races across the country. The track’s owners decided to close the track after the veto, Roth said.

Meanwhile, Indian casinos have boomed, and several years ago, they expanded their gambling options, once restricted to slot machines and a few table games, over the objections of the dog-racing industry.

Some industry experts, however, blamed the decline in dog racing on the sport itself.

“You don’t get the serious bettor like you do with horse racing,” said Bill Thompson, a professor and gaming expert at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, who sees a grim future for the industry. “You can’t track dogs as scientifically as you can horses. The serious dog racer is just betting on (colors) and favorite names.”

Casinos almost certainly have hurt, especially because of slot machines, said Anthony Lucas, an author on gaming and assistant professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

“With progressive payouts, you can change your life for $1.25,” Lucas said. “That’s a tough thing for dog tracks to compete against.”

Kenosha’s Dairyland track has suffered as well. Attendance slipped to 355,000 in 2004, from 1.5 million in 1991, and the handle sagged to $67 million from $170 million in 1991.

“It’s a very unfriendly environment in Wisconsin, with Native American gaming,” said Roy Berger, Dairyland’s executive vice president.

The track is likely to be sold to an Indian tribe that wants to build a giant casino on the site, Berger said. Whether dog racing would continue after the sale is uncertain, he said.

An industry group, the Greyhound Racing Association of America, says the sport is on solid footing although attendance is down because bettors are wagering online. The group says casino games are needed to get people out to the tracks.

There are three dozen tracks operating in 12 states, and wagers total $2 billion a year, the group said.

Some Geneva Lakes’ trainers, like Darryl Munkres, 34, will move to Dairyland Park. Others will retire or move to Florida, which has more than a dozen tracks.

“It’s not really a job. It’s more like a lifestyle, because these greyhounds depend on you,” Munkres said.
Authorities Yank Dog Trainer’s License

The Action Follows The Heat-related Death Of A Former Racing Greyhound.

Wisconsin State Journal

Saturday, November 25, 2006
GEORGE HESSELBERG ghesselberg@madison.com 608-252-6140

In a rare cruelty case, the license of a Kenosha greyhound trainer has been revoked by state dog racing authorities following the heat-related death of a dog in August.

According to Division of Gaming discipline records, Robert E. Johnson, 36, a dog trainer at the Dairyland Greyhound Park, also violated the state’s “rules of racing” by removing the dogs from the state without notice and by placing former racing dogs at an unapproved dog adoption agency in Virginia.

Johnson is appealing the revocation, but his appeal of a suspension for breaking adoption rules has already been denied, state racing officials said.

In addition to losing his trainer license for 90 days, Johnson was fined $1,300 following an investigation by state and track officials who oversee the state’s remaining dog-racing track.

Johnson, in an appeal of the suspension ruling, said he was trying to safely place seven retired racers the second week of August when he left Kenosha with the dogs in his truck, intending to take them to West Virginia for adoption.

His problem, he said, was he didn’t know where he was going to place them and faced a deadline from unidentified officials to remove the dogs from the track.

"The group that we originally planned (to place the dogs with) backed out, so I had to call around and try to find a group," he told the appeals board, according to a transcript of the September appeal.

Johnson said his search was limited because he wanted to place the dogs, but "not with an anti-racing group." He managed to arrange temporary care when he reached West Virginia, then arranged to place them with a private greyhound rescue agency, Central Virginia Greyhounds. But that group is not an approved adoption agency by the state.

Johnson said he delayed his departure from the Wisconsin track until the
evening, when the temperatures were cooler, and that he checked on
the dogs' health several times during the trip to make sure they had
water and ice.

Johnson traveled to Cross Lanes, W.Va., to the Tri-State Racetrack and
Gaming Center, where he said he met a friend and "at that point three of
those greyhounds were definitely, you know, in the start of heat
exhaustion."

They put the dogs underwater and "we got bounce back in them," said
Johnson, and two recovered quickly. He took them to his friend's kennel
and, three hours after leaving, he was told one dog died.

"I feel horrible about this whole situation," he said. "I mean, I'm a good
dog guy and I love these dogs."

Johnson said he was taking the dogs for adoption because they were
past their racing days and they could not remain in Dairyland track's
overflow kennel any longer.

The dog that died was Kambrie Rose.

The six others are TJ'S Mayberry, TJ'S Club, TJ'S Zeke, Daring Cabela,
More Money and One Red Cent, according to state records.

Four of the remaining dogs are now at Central Virginia Greyhounds,
where an owner, Sheila Armel, said they are healthy and ready for
adoption. The two other dogs are at another private adoption group in
Virginia, she said.

Aramel said Johnson did not tell her one of the dogs had died, however.
Nor did he provide her with any medical records, requiring all of the dogs
be re-vaccinated, she said.

Dan Subach, the state's top racing official, said last week the state
started an investigation at Dairyland in August after being alerted
"through the grapevine." He said a revocation is a rarity in the dog
racing business in Wisconsin, with an average of about one per year.

Bill Agpar, a Dairyland track supervisor, said "We back the ruling of the
commission and have no further comment."
Investigation focused on Troha tactics, associates

(Published Friday, May 18, 2007 11:57:56 PM CST)

By Ryan J. Foley and Todd Richmond/Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. - A Kenosha trucking tycoon accused of illegally funneling money to Gov. Jim Doyle's campaign used questionable political tactics in his business dealings dating back to when his group tried to develop one of Wisconsin's first dog racing tracks, according to a state investigation released Friday.

Dennis Troha and his partners improperly tried to influence then-Gov. Tommy Thompson into awarding their group one of the state's first dog track operator's license in 1989, the investigation by the state Department of Administration's Division of Gaming found.

In his recent attempt at building a casino in Kenosha, Troha failed to disclose to the Division of Gaming he had been interviewed by state investigators regarding the track license in the past, the investigation said. The past investigation never led to charges.

The information released Friday, including a 46-page summary and more than 1,000 pages of investigative reports and documents, also delved into Troha's associates.

"Dennis Troha has a history of having business partners with ties to organized crime," it said.

Troha's spokesman, Jeff Fleming, called the investigation "a compilation of every unsubstantiated innuendo and rumor."

"The contents of the report have not been verified or subjected to the routine review that the state would ordinarily conduct before making formal findings," Fleming said in a statement. "Because of the circumstances, it is neither fair nor practical for Mr. Troha to respond to specific statements in the report."

The Gaming Division investigated Troha's background as part of an application by Kenesah Gaming Development asking for
state permission to partner with the Menominee and Mohegan tribes to develop an $808 million casino in Kenosha.

A federal grand jury indicted Troha in March for allegedly committing fraud and lying to the FBI about donations to Doyle. The indictment alleges Troha funneled more than $100,000 through family members to Doyle's campaign and others, skirting state laws that cap donations at $10,000 per election.

Doyle has the final say over whether the Kenosha casino can go ahead.

Troha has pleaded not guilty. He sold his share of the project to the Mohegan in February, shortly before he was indicted.

On Friday the Division of Gaming officially decided to allow him to withdraw from the project.

In releasing that decision, the division also released the investigation that was completed in February. It offers no recommendation on whether the state should grant Kenesah the development contract.

The investigation detailed how Troha and his partners in Kenosha Gateway Development Limited Partnership tried to obtain a dog track operator’s license in Kenosha in 1989.

Thompson, who now is seeking the Republican nomination for president, was governor at the time, and the state had just legalized parimutuel betting and decided to allow development of five dog tracks.

The Wisconsin Racing Board ultimately gave the license to Dairyland Greyhound Park, Inc., instead of Troha’s group, the investigation noted.

The state Justice Department probed how Dairyland won the license. Though no charges were ever filed, the probe found that Troha and his friends believed they had the license “in the bag” because of dealings with Thompson associates and alleged promises to make campaign contributions to the then-governor.

The investigation also found that Troha met with Menominee tribal legislators in 2000 in Chicago and persuaded them to rescind a tribal gaming commission decision that Troha associate and former Congressman Morgan Murphy Jr. was “unsuitable” to work with on the casino project - tactics the state investigation called “questionable.”

Thompson spokesman Tony Jewell said when contacted Friday night that the licensing decisions were made independently.

“All decisions on gaming licenses were made by the independent gaming board, and in this case the license was ultimately awarded to another organization,” he said.

Messages left by The Associated Press for Doyle spokesman Matt Canter weren’t immediately returned.
Advocate decries dog track oversight

Injuries at Dairyland too high, she says

By DON WALKER
dwalker@journalsentinel.com


The leader of a national organization opposed to greyhound racing criticized state regulators and officials on Monday for lax oversight of injuries involving dogs at Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha.

Susan Netboy, who heads the California-based Greyhound Protection League, said the number of injuries to dogs in recent years at Dairyland "far exceeds the acceptable norm in dog racing or any other sport."

"This has been the case since the track was built in 1990," she said. "Eighteen years of high injury rates suggests structural defects that cannot be fixed with resurfacing and grooming. For all of these years, management has been unwilling to effectively address this underlying problem, and hundreds of greyhounds have paid the price."

The Journal Sentinel reported Monday that 76 greyhounds broke their legs while racing in 2007. Jenifer Barker, the state's on-site veterinarian, said that was the highest number of broken legs in at least 12 years. In all of 2007, 462 injuries were reported to track and state officials. That is a 19% increase from 2006.

Bill Apgar, general manager of the track, the state's last pari-mutuel greyhound-race track, dismissed Netboy's comments.

"Their agenda to shut down the industry is well-documented," Apgar said. "We won't comment on such propaganda."

Dan Subach, the chief state steward at Dairyland for the state's Gaming Division, said in a statement: "The welfare of the greyhounds is our major focus, and we will continue to work with the kennels and the track to try to minimize injuries."

State officials have pointed to a variety of factors leading to more injuries. They include the condition of the racetrack, the race quality of the greyhounds and the weather: The track is open year-round but is closed during severe weather.

Netboy said, however, that blaming the injury rate on the kind of greyhounds running at the track or the weather was "the height of arrogance."
"The Gaming Division is charged with addressing greyhound welfare issues; they should have stepped in years ago and forced the track to make whatever changes are necessary or pull their license if they are unwilling to comply," she said.

Netboy’s comments came as a second kennel operator declared his intention to get out of the race business. Bob Ryan, who lives in Florida and operates the Sunrunner Kennel at Dairyland, said Monday that he was getting out of the business because he’s losing money, and he’s concerned about dogs getting hurt at the track.

"I’ve lost $10,000 since Labor Day, and I can’t go on any longer," Ryan said.

Earlier, Junior J’s Kennel asked the track to be relieved of its contract at the track; the request was granted. Until recently, 16 kennels operated the track. But smaller purses and a general turndown in business have resulted in losses both for the track and the dog owners.

"From last September to now, the money put into the purses has been tremendously low," Ryan said. Second, the number of injuries at the track bothered him, he said. Ryan said years ago that it was not that expensive to pay for surgery on a dog that broke a leg or suffered a serious injury. "Now, it costs $1,000 to $2,000," he said.

The 50 or so dogs that race under the Sunrunner banner will be distributed to other kennels or put up for adoption.

Last Saturday, 16 dogs that were waiting to be adopted from the track were moved to an adoption agency in Alberta, Canada.
More greyhounds broke legs at Dairyland racetrack in 2007

Greyhounds streak toward the finish line at Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha in April. A state veterinarian cited the condition of the track’s surface and deterioration of the greyhound industry as reasons for increased injury rates.

Dog racing injuries increase

By DON WALKER

twalker@journalsentinel.com

Seventy-six greyhounds broke their legs racing last year at Dairyland Greyhound Park, an 18.7% increase over the year before, state records show.

A broken leg, or hock, is considered to be one of the most serious injuries a greyhound can suffer at a track.

In all, a total of 462 injuries were reported at the track last year, a 19% increase from 2006.

Of those 462 injuries last year, 363 involved dogs that suffered muscle-related injuries, sprains or fractures. Track owners have complained for several years that the state’s Gaming Division, which regulates the track and compiles injury statistics, throws together relatively minor injuries like nail or tail injuries along with the more serious injuries.

The 2007 report makes a distinction between the more severe injuries and the minor ones.

Asked to explain why more dogs are breaking their legs, state officials pointed to a number of factors, including the condition of the track, the race quality of the greyhounds and the weather. Greyhounds run year-round at the track, which opened in 1990 and is the state’s last remaining dog racing track.

Please see DOGS, 7A

“Nobody likes injuries. This is an athletic contest, and injuries do happen. We spare no expense in making the track as safe as we can.”

Bill Apgar,
track general manager
More serious injuries reported

Jennifer Barker, a state veterinarian at Dairyland, who treats most of the injured dogs at the track, said the condition of the track’s surface and the maintenance of the greyhound industry in general are reasons for the increased injury rate.

The track has not been completely re surfaced since at least 1985, according to Bill Appert, the track’s general manager. However, he said the track is constantly maintained and groomed for the dogs.

“Nobody likes injuries,” he said. “This is an old, old problem, and injuries do happen. We speak no expense in making the track as safe as we can.”

Appert said the track employed four full-time employees to groom the track, plus three part-timers. In addition, a maintenance director, the track’s racing director and Appert himself monitor the track, he said.

Appert said that not every injury is attributable to the track itself. “A third of these injuries were injuries when the dogs were bumped in turns. Other injuries could be the result of the animal thinking that the dog got bumped, didn’t show any effects right away and the next time he ran, he broke down,” he said.

Racetrack and veterinary peers around the country did not have a policy on how often a track needs to be resurfaced, but said a rule of thumb is every three to five years.

Industry experts have differing opinions on what constitutes a well-maintained track that minimizes injury. Some say a hard surface is the best surface; others say a more forgiving surface can minimize injury. Barker said the greyhound industry has been in decline for years, a victim of declining fates, and the use of crossover training.

“Some have called it a dying industry,” he said. “There’s not much money in it, and I don’t think too many racetracks are buying the dogs now.”

Barker recalled a time in the 1990’s when each kennel at a track had an on-track veterinarian, but not at Dairyland.

Barker said that in 2010, the Greyhound, who is on the track, plays a role in injuries at Dairyland. The dogs are subjected to rain, wind, snow,leet and very dry conditions.

And there is a concern that the quality of dogs being sent abroad is getting as good as they’ve been in the past,” he said. “And that quality may be related to poor health issues, or previous injuries. Finally, when dogs are run well, they tend to be moved off to other tracks.”

“Greyhound Racing in Wisconsin” | December 2010

We asked to look at the kennels and the conditions and training of the dogs, and make sure they are putting a stop to cross-training on the track.

Barker said that cross-training, greyhound racing, the track also offers a program for dogs and greyhound racers, but he refused comment on the conditions. In 2006, the track reported it had lost 12,541 million track owners say they expect to report they lost millions in 2007.

The owners of Dairyland are awaiting federal approval of a proposed $16 million project that would be built on the grounds of the dog track. T. T. 100-mile tribe to buy the track for $1 million. The tribe is partnering with the Mohegan tribe to build the casino and continue live racing. The tribe wants to develop and manage the casino for seven years.
Old greyhounds can be taught new tricks, with patience and perspective

BY JOHN KEROWYCE
jkerowyc@kenoshanews.com

Old greyhounds need to be taught new tricks before they’re adopted.

Adoption agencies that accept the retired racing dogs must teach them how to live in a home, said Ellen Paulus, Greyhound Pets of America-Wisconsin president.

“They have lived in a cage, so they do things like bark at mirrors because they’ve never seen themselves before,” she said.

Paulus said her first greyhound pat scampers away when the television was turned on.

The dogs also have never had anything that belonged to them, so they need to learn that chewing on that squeaky toy is acceptable but couch pillows are off limits, Paulus said.

Kate Block, Milwaukee, a GPA volunteers/dog foster parent, said greyhounds are used to padding along concrete, so tiled kitchen floors or carpeting are new experiences.

Stairs can befuddle greyhounds, who spend most of their time on flat surfaces and tracks. They have to coordinate their paws and legs to master the steps up and down, she said.

Block has gingerly picked up dogs’ paws and placed them on each step to help them get the idea.

Windows and glass doors are unique in the dogs’ eyes, Block said. Some people put stickers on glass doors so the dogs know it is there.

Dogs usually adapt to new settings after a few days of acclimation, she said.

Learning to see things from their perspective is important, said Block.

“In the fall, our dog suddenly became very alert, and I didn’t know what was wrong,” she said. “It turned out it was the leaves blowing on the street making noise, and the dog couldn’t figure out what that was.”

“Some of the things we take for granted and ignore are things they’ve never seen before. It’s a totally new experience for them.”
Track flaws halt 11 Dairyland dog races

By Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: Dec. 31, 2008

A matinee scheduled Wednesday afternoon at Dairyland Greyhound Track was canceled because a portion of the racetrack was in poor condition, according to the track's manager.

The cancellation of 11 races came one day after the state veterinarian on duty at the state's last remaining dog track told the Journal Sentinel that she had concerns that the condition of the track was a factor in recent injuries. During one recent weekend, three greyhounds broke their legs on the track because of the hardness of the race surface, said veterinarian Jenifer Barker.

Later that day, Dec. 20, Barker e-mailed her supervisors at the state's Division of Gaming saying that, in her opinion, she could not approve the track surface for racing. Racing went on as scheduled that night.

Barker said she looked at the replay of one of the races in which the leg of one of the greyhounds snapped in half.

"I went back to the area, and I thought the surface was very hard," she said.

Barker emphasized that she does not have the authority to shut down racing.

"I didn't say we should stop racing," she said. "I just said that I don't approve the surface."

Added Barker: "I understand the jeopardy shutting down the track puts on the business. But as a veterinarian, my sole purpose is to look after the greyhounds, and I didn't feel it was safe."

On Wednesday, the races were canceled because a very small portion of the track was frozen, said Bill Apgar, the track's general manager. He said 99% of the track was in excellent condition, but one area was a problem.

Apgar and other track officials have vehemently denied that any greyhounds have been put in jeopardy because of the condition of the track. The track has a heating system in which coils underneath the surface keep the track soft in winter. That system was turned on Tuesday night and was left on during the day Wednesday.

Barker said that as temperatures have dropped, there have been more problems with certain areas of the track freezing up.

"That has been my major concern," she said.

Barker said she wasn't calling for a complete resurfacing, something that track owners admit hasn't been done since the 1990s. "I would be happy with removing the top layer and peeling underneath and seeing what lies
beneath," she said.

"The question I have is whether the boilers are functioning properly, or whether the heating coils are plugged in or whether they are working. I would like someone to look into this."

"We run on a safe race track," Apgar said Wednesday.

Through November, 56 dogs have broken their hocks on the track this year. That is considered to be the most serious kind of injury. Overall, the number of injuries at the track appears to be down somewhat, compared with 2007.

At least 15 greyhounds have died from a variety of injuries this year.

Track owners are still waiting to see if the administration of President George W. Bush or the incoming administration of President-elect Barack Obama will decide whether the Menominee Indian Tribe can build a casino on the grounds of the track. Track officials say that the track would remain open should a casino be built.

Meanwhile, the track is losing money. Track officials told state officials that they expected to lose $2.48 million in 2008, and as much as $2.8 million in 2009. In recent weeks, at least two kennels have shut down for financial reasons.
Kenosha News

Published April 11, 2009 | 12:24 a.m.

Attendance, profit down for Dairyland

Dog track must remain open under deal with tribe

By Mark Hornickel
mhornickel@kenoshanews.com

Attendance and revenue have continued to decline, according to a report released this week, but the Dairyland Greyhound Park’s executive vice president says the state’s only remaining dog track will continue to operate.

Dairyland’s executive vice president Roy Berger said the losses are no surprise, but the track must remain open under an arrangement with the Menominee Tribe that hinges on a proposed casino.

The Menominee Nation holds a $40.5 million option to purchase the track if and when the federal and state governments sign off on a $808 million casino plan.

“We’re obligated to keep the race track up and running for the Menominee,” Berger said. “That’s an obligation we will fulfill and we’re just hoping we get the approval.”

The latest audit showed Dairyland lost $3.4 million in 2008, on top of a $2.8 loss in 2007. The track lost a reported $2.85 million in 2005.

At the same time, attendance at the race track totaled 233,217 last year, down from 273,332 in 2007. About $46 million was wagered at the track in 2008, down from $64 million in 2007.

Outside of the casino plan coming to fruition, Berger said any upside for the track “is virtually nil.”

While he blamed the pari-mutuel racing track’s bad business partly on the economy, Berger said dog racing has been a tough business for years. Wisconsin once had five dog tracks and Dairyland is the only one that remains open.

“The problem is the business has just fallen out of favor or the only chance for it is with added gaming,” Berger said. “We need some type of added gaming. That’s the only thing that will make a difference.”

Dairyland has asked the state for some relief, but lawmakers so far have been reluctant to help.

“The state has continually turned their backs on us or any type of tax relief,” Berger said. “We’ve made a statement on what they think of the industry. Our plan now is to be a good community citizen and we intend to keep operating.”

On Jan. 7, the federal government rejected the latest application by the Menominee tribe to build a $1 billion casino development where the dog track now sits. The government cited non-compliance with a January 2008 Interior Department guidance memorandum that discouraged the approval of off-reservation casinos on sites outside of a “commutable distance” of a tribe’s reservation.

In the meantime, Kenosha casino spokesman Evan Zeppos said this week that the Menominee Nation has dropped a lawsuit against the federal government that challenged Bush administration approval guidelines. Zeppos said the tribe will instead pursue an open dialog in its attempt to revive the casino proposal.
Is Dairyland a drain on the state?
By Dan Walker of the Journal Sentinel
Apr. 28, 2009 2:01 p.m.

Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha, the state's lone pari-mutuel dog-racing track, lost $3.44 million last year.

While Dairyland's financial troubles are well known, the larger question, especially in the context of a terrible economy, is whether the state still gains financially by regulating the sport.

The short answer is yes. But the gap between what the Wisconsin Division of Gaming is taking in from the track and what it is spending to regulate is closing, according to Bob Sloey, administrator of the state Division of Gaming.

According to figures in the year ending June 30, 2008, the state took in $1,331,502 in revenue from the dog-race track. By comparison, the state spent a total of $1,204,346.

Revenue coming to the state includes, among other things, pari-mutuel and program taxes, licensing fees, and racing supervision fees.

On the spending side, the state spent money on salaries and fringe benefits, as well as money on supplies and services.

The state has six, full-time employees working directly to regulate the dog track, and 11 limited-term employees.

Sloey said it is true that the gap between revenue and expenses is closing.

"We won't lose any money for the year ending June 30, 2009," he said. "We are still generating enough money to cover the costs of regulating."
Dairyland Dog Park Contemplates Closing

Dog Track Not Bringing In Enough Spectators

POSTED: 7:26 pm CDT October 12, 2009
UPDATED: 8:05 pm CDT October 12, 2009
KENOSHA, Wis. -- Wisconsin's last operating dog track may be shutting down.

Dairyland Dog Park in Kenosha has seen dwindling revenue for years. Changes would not only affect the hundreds of race dogs, but Kenosha's economy could experience a major impact.

Dog racing doesn't have the draw it used to in Wisconsin. Just a handful of people go to Dairyland on a regular day to do some off-track betting.

When the track first opened, the parking lots would be packed. Thousands of people would come to Dairyland on a daily basis, but now the lots are half empty on most days, while just a few hundred customers come in.

"We've incurred several years of significant losses our revenues are way, way down," said Bill Apgar, Dairyland's General Manager and vice president of operations.

Apgar said attendance was down 19 percent from last year, and money wagered was down 29 percent.

"The management at Dairyland has been charged by our board of directors to take a hard look at what we want to do with 2010," Apgar said.

The track's possible closing leaves about 800 dogs homeless.

"Usually there's between 3 and 600 dogs that have to work themselves into adoption," Kari Swanson said.

Swanson, of Midwest Greyhound Adoption, said some of the dogs will be placed in the group's kennel and with foster homes. Then word goes out to other adoption groups to help the rest.

"About 80 percent of the dogs we take in from the track have broken legs," Swanson said.

If there is an upside, the group will no longer have to attend to so many emergencies. However, the emergency may become an economic one.
"But certainly, 200 jobs at Dairyland, if those go away, they're hard to replace," Kenosha mayor Keith Bosman said.

Bosman looked at the job losses that could occur. About 200 jobs at the track would be lost, not to mention supporting businesses. For years, the Menominee Indian tribe has tried to buy Dairyland to put in a casino. The issue is stuck in red tape in Washington.

"We were hopeful, we're still hopeful, something might happen," Bosman said.

The track's management has until November 16th to decide if it will remain open or close down.
Investigation launched into 6 greyhound deaths at Dairyland

By Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: Oct. 21, 2009 6:30 a.m.

Two state agencies are investigating what caused the death of six greyhounds, including two last weekend, at the Dairyland Greyhound Track in Kenosha.

The agencies are the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, which is testing the food the dogs ate, and the state Division of Gaming, which has jurisdiction over the state's last pari-mutuel race track.

The deaths of the six dogs date to August. Four of the dogs bled to death, according to state records.

One possibility that is causing the deaths is a food-borne illness, which is why the state Department of Agriculture is involved.

Bob Sloey, the head of the Gaming Division, confirmed that state officials were involved in what he called "an active investigation."

"We are concerned and we are a part of it, and we will continue to investigate if there is causation or any commonalities," Sloey said Tuesday. "We are absolutely drilling this down to the lowest possible level to determine if there is something happening there."

Sloey said the two dogs that died last weekend came from different kennels. The first four deaths came from kennels operated by the same kennel operator.

Donna Gilson, an Agriculture Department spokeswoman, said her agency had set up a Toxic Response Team to look into the dog deaths. She said the agency took samples of the food the animals were eating.

She said she hoped the team would have results by the end of the week. Sloey said he was unsure when his agency would complete its investigation.

Roy Berger, Dairyland's executive vice president, said Tuesday he was not aware of the investigation.

The state probe comes as Dairyland officials weigh whether to close the track for good. The track lost $3.4 million last year, and has seen attendance drop 19% so far this year.
Track officials say they will make a decision on the future of the track no later than Nov. 16. This Thursday, workers at the track are planning a rally in support of keeping the track open. The rally is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. in front of the track.
Dairyland Greyhound Park calling it quits Dec. 31

State's last track blames competition from casinos

By Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: Nov. 10, 2009

In 1989, state regulators with dollar signs in their eyes approved five operating licenses for pari-mutuel greyhound racing in Wisconsin.

For a time, race fans and bettors flocked to the tracks in Geneva Lakes, Kaukauna, Lake Delton, Hudson and Kenosha, generating millions for the state and the developers.

But once the door opened for Indian casinos, attendance and revenue began to drop. One by one, the tracks went out of business.

The era ended Tuesday when the operators of Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha, the state's last pari-mutuel greyhound race track, announced they would close the track Dec. 31.

The announcement means an estimated 183 people will lose their jobs. Meanwhile, regulators, kennel operators and owners, as well as regional greyhound adoption groups, will scramble to find homes for what one adoption provider said could be anywhere from 300 to 500 racing greyhounds.

Roy Berger, Dairyland's executive vice president, said it was a sad day for the track and its employees. The track, which opened on June 20, 1990, was doomed because "the gaming landscape in the state has been slanted against pari-mutuel racing from the inception of Native American casinos," Berger said.

Berger said the track lost an estimated $17 million in the past seven years, as the handle - the amount wagered on races - and attendance dropped. Business this year is down 28% compared with last year, he said.

"Every year was worse than the year before," he said. "We had to say, 'Enough is enough.'"

Berger said no decision had been made on any kind of severance packages for employees.
Records at the state Division of Gaming, which regulated the track, show the trend was unmistakable. In 1990, the first year the track was open, $210.6 million was wagered. Twelve years later, in 2002, the handle was down to $102.7 million. In 2008, attendance totaled 233,217 and the handle was $46 million.

A state Gaming spokesman said that in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2009, the state took in $1.1 million in revenue from Dairyland, but spent $920,400 to regulate the sport - nearly a wash.

Dog tracks opened in Wisconsin after voters in 1987 approved a constitutional amendment allowing the creation of a state-run lottery and legalizing pari-mutuel betting. In 1991, a federal judge ruled that because Wisconsin had a lottery and legalized betting at dog tracks, the state also had to let Indian tribes open casinos.

There were more than 3.5 million visitors to the dog tracks in 1991, the first year all five were open. Attendance dropped steadily in the 1990s. In 1994, four of the five tracks reported losses. Only Dairyland was making any money.

Ironically, Berger's group and the Menominee Indian tribe, in concert with the Mohegan, still have hopes of converting the track into a $1 billion casino and entertainment complex. Berger said his group would continue to support the Menominee's effort to build the casino. The tribe has a $40 million option to buy the property.

"The Obama administration says it wants job growth. The Menominee proposal would create 3,000 jobs and would not cost a penny in federal money or stimulus money," Berger said.

The Menominee are continuing to pursue a lawsuit against the federal government, challenging a denial of the project that was issued in the final days of the Bush administration. Evan Zeppos, a spokesman for the tribe, said tribal leaders felt they had a strong case.

In the meantime, greyhound adoption groups already have been trying to find homes for greyhounds that are not headed to another track or an owner elsewhere in the country. "We have been working on this for weeks," said Ellen Paulus, the head of the Wisconsin chapter of Greyhound Pets of America. "We want to place as many animals as we can."
Dairyland Greyhound Park to be shut down

MICHAEL BURKE mburke@journaltimes.com | Posted: Tuesday, November 10, 2009 3:20 pm

KENOSHA - The last of the state's five original greyhound racing parks will soon be shut down.

Dairyland Greyhound Park will discontinue operations after its last race on Dec. 31, the owners announced Tuesday. The closing will cost both people and dogs their jobs.

"It's a sad day for the Dairyland family and Kenosha community," Dairyland Executive Vice President Roy Berger stated in a news release. He said the employees were informed Tuesday.

After seven money-losing years, Berger said, the Alabama-based owners, with minority Wisconsin ownership, decided to quit.

The shutdown will cost 180 jobs - roughly one-third full-time and two-thirds part-time, Berger estimated.

He stated, "Now our focus is hoping our 180 employees can transition to new jobs and helping our kennel owners and operators work in conjunction with the state of Wisconsin to find homes for the racing greyhounds either at other racetracks or through an adoption program."

Berger added a plug for the Dairyland employees.

Dairyland and the four other racetracks were built about two decades ago after the state authorized pari-mutuel betting. In pari-mutuel betting, the amount bet is divided among the winners, with the house keeping a commission.

Dairyland was built for about $45 million, Berger said. It opened on June 20, 1990, just off Highway 158 and Interstate 94.

Decline

According to Dairyland, for a few years it "enjoyed success as one of Wisconsin's top tourist attractions."

Dairyland survived as greyhound racetracks in Hudson, the Fox Valley, Wisconsin Dells and finally Geneva Lakes closed.

In a telephone interview, Berger insisted that authorizing pari-mutuel betting was not a mistake. But Dairyland contends the state and federal governments steadily took away the racetracks' ability to stay in the betting game.

Berger said the racetracks were limited to pari-mutuel betting - and no casinos or any other types of gaming.

Ultimately, Dairyland said, the spread of American Indian gaming, and especially Potawatomi Bingo Casino in Milwaukee, "combined with a sputtering economy to seal the fate of the last of the five greyhound racetracks in the state."

"The gaming landscape in the state has been slanted against pari-mutuel racing from the inception of Native American casinos," Dairyland stated.

"It has been virtually impossible for us to compete fairly. Every time we asked the Legislature or state gaming officials for consideration with games to help make us competitive, we have been rebuked."

Berger compared it to the government preventing a retailer from stocking newer and better products as they become available.

"Finally," Dairyland stated, "we have reached the point, after seven years of steadily escalating losses, where we just can't see any viability with a single out-of-favor product and have been forced to make this decision."

Dairyland said it continues to support the Menominee Indian tribe's application for federal approval to put the Dairyland property into trust and convert it to a $1 billion casino/entertainment complex. Supporters say it would create 3,000 jobs with no public money.

Kenosha voters have twice approved the concept in referendums.

Berger said greyhound racing will continue as usual through New Year's Eve.
Last Days at Kenosha’s Dairyland

A lone spectator watches one of 20 races run at Kenosha’s Dairyland Racetrack Nov. 22, 2009. (WBEZ/Kate Gardiner)

There’s almost no one in the stands at Kenosha’s Dairyland Racetrack these days.

The bleachers — set up to seat more than 16,000 people — are completely empty every weekend.

Attendance, and a long-standing bid from Wisconsin’s Menominee Indian Tribe to turn the track into the state’s 29th casino, mean the track will close on December 31. The government has yet to sign off on the deal — but the tribe says they’d bring more than 3,000 jobs to the area — and more than a billion dollars in economic growth.

Roy Berger is the track’s spokesman. He’s in favor of the casino plan. He says it’s the best option for jobs for the track’s more than 250 employees.

“The dog racing industry has fallen apart,” he says. “There’s no market for it. People have shown time and time again they want to push buttons or pull levers. Pari-mutuel tracks are dead.”

He says the casino is two signatures away from completion. Without it, Dairyland’s 250 employees have few options — unemployment in Wisconsin hit 8.4 percent in October.

Handlers, known as leadouts calm their dogs after a race at Kenosha’s Dairyland Racetrack. Most dogs are worth less than $5,000 — regardless of their record. (WBEZ/Kate Gardiner)
Tradition

To the locals, it’s not only about the business side of the track.

Kennel owner Greg Deuel owns more than 25 greyhounds. They race all over the country. He’s based in Kenosha – where he first discovered the sport more than 15 years ago.

He says he’s not sure what he’ll do with all of his dogs – but that most of them will move to other tracks around the country.

“I’m looking into a kennel space in Florida,” he says. “I think most of the dogs will go there.”

With the closure of the Wisconsin track, Deuel has little choice if he wants to keep with the sport. There are fewer than 40 tracks left in the country – and only 4 in the Midwest.

“The one track I’m looking to get into, they have a website where you can watch live video,” he says. “And I got the cell phone so I can make calls to the trainer all the time.”

Deuel says he’s planning to move most of his racing dogs to the new space, and to get licensed to run a kennel, long-distance. He cares for more than 120 dogs in Kenosha.

He says the dogs get Twinkies when they win. The rest of the time, they’re in kennels.

“These dogs get turned 4 or 5 times a day,” he says. “They’re never alone. And they get to listen to country music on the radio.”

Deuel says track employees have few options, if they want to stay in the industry. But, he says, few other part-time jobs have the same perks. “How many times can you just go pick up a dog, pet ‘em, wash ‘em off, and actually get paid to do it?” he asked.

Playing the Numbers

Dairyland was on track to make its target attendance numbers in the mid-1990s. Average attendance was around 4,000 on the weekends.

Then the state allowed the first of 28 casinos on Indian reservations around the state.

“We tried to hang on as long as we could,” says track spokesman Berger. “But the bottom line is that the business is gone, it’s basically yesterday.”

Berger says the track has been losing money for the past 7 years. “Today, people that want entertainment want casino-style gaming,” he says. “We’ve been prohibited in Wisconsin from doing that. We just couldn’t compete.”

“When Wisconsin got into the business, the industry was on a high,” he says. “But about three years later, when Wisconsin allowed Native American gaming… it got to the point where we couldn’t compete.”

Deuel says he discovered the sport at the end of the industry high, about 15 years ago. “When I first started coming here it was packed,” he says. “They had tellers in every window, and lines. You got 1,500 to 2,000 people. Now, you’re lucky if you get four, five hundred.”

“I love working with the dogs, watching them run,” Deuel says. “It’s the last track in Wisconsin – and it was the first track I’ve been to. It’s sad that it’s gonna be closed.”

Dogs on the track at Dairyland. (WBEZ/Kate Gardiner)

To adopt a dog from Dairyland or other tracks around the country, visit the track’s website. Wisconsin state law says racing dogs must be placed in a home or facility after their racing career ends.
Couple helping greyhounds find homes

Hundreds of dogs homeless as Wisconsin track closes

Darby Prater
The Enquirer

A Battle Creek couple is trying to find a new home for their 3 1/2-year-old, and there are many others just like her that need loving homes.

Bitsy is a gentle, playful girl who can outrun most cars in the Lakeview neighborhood, where her parents Melissa and Clayton DeGayner live.

She is their foster pet -- a greyhound in the same situation as the 400 to 600 that will be displaced by the end of the year with the closing of Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha, Wis., the last dog track in the Dairy State.

The track, which opened in 1990, last month announced plans to close after losing millions of dollars each year over the past several years. The federal government denied an application from the Menominee tribe to build a $1 billion gaming casino on track grounds, according to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

The DeGayners, working through Second Chance for Greyhounds in Kalamazoo, are attempting to find local homes for some of those dogs, which Melissa DeGayner says are mistreated at the dog track.

"They're treated as a commodity rather than as pets," she said of the dogs, which can reach 40 mph in three strides.

She said that racing dogs are typically kept in inhumane conditions.

DeGayner said the racing greyhounds are put in crates that are about 3-feet-by-4-feet for 22 hours a day, that they are forced to relieve themselves in sand pits full of mites and fleas, and that they sleep on either shredded paper or carpet remnants.

William Apgar Jr., vice president of operations and general manager at Dairyland, could not be reached by phone on Thursday.

DeGayner, whose husband, Clayton, is president of the Second Chance Board of Directors, said since the dogs are treated poorly while boarded for racing, they need to be taught how to behave when they enter a home. But she said their temperament is generally docile. She would know, since the couple has three greyhounds at home. Melissa DeGayner refers to them as their kids.

"Most greyhounds are really good with kids," she said. "They're very gentle, very intelligent and very loving. They just like to snuggle. And they're quiet."

She added that the dogs' short fur keeps shedding to a minimum.

"I fell in love with greyhounds 18 years ago," she said. "I love their demeanor and how they look. It's
such a worthy cause and not enough people know about it."

_Darby Prater can be reached at 966-0589 or dprater@gannett.com.__

**Additional Facts**

Want to adopt a greyhound?

**WHO TO TALK TO:** Second Chance for Greyhounds, based in Kalamazoo.

**ADOPTION FEE:** $225.

**WHAT IT COVERS:** Spaying/neutering, dental work, shots, parasite removal treatments, de-worming, and a new leash, collar and muzzle.

**MORE INFORMATION:** Call 269-349-5104 or click the link on this story at battlecreekenquirer.com to view e-mail addresses for board members of Second Chance.

Source: Melissa DeGayner, Second Chance board member.
Greyhounds going up for adoption as Kenosha dog track closes

Wisconsin's last dog track to shut on Dec. 31

By Lisa Black

Tribune reporter

December 15, 2009

As Roxanne prepared to travel to the veterinarian's office, it became apparent that she had much to learn about retirement. The sweet brindle greyhound had never seen stairs before, was frightened of the leash and had to be hoisted aboard the makeshift bus.

Roxanne's racing days are over at Kenosha's Dairyland Greyhound Park, which is going out of business Dec. 31. The journey to her new life began when Kari Swanson of far west suburban Sugar Grove recently picked her up at the park and began preparing her for adoption.

Swanson and other greyhound advocates have spent the last few weeks transporting dogs as they become available to avoid a last-minute panic when some 600 Dairyland dogs become suddenly unemployed. Swanson is bracing for a deluge of these gentle creatures -- most of them young, some injured -- who need good homes.

"We will be stuffed to the gills," said Swanson, whose nonprofit Midwest Greyhound Adoption opened in 1991. "There is never a time when we have a slow time, but we don't always work as crazy as this."

Swanson has been through several Wisconsin track closings, taking in 65 dogs over three weeks when Geneva Lakes Kennel Club in Delavan closed in 2006. While she takes in greyhounds year-round, she is now at her busiest, making 180-mile round trips to Kenosha and hauling back dogs in her used shuttle bus.

Dairyland is the last of five dog tracks left in Wisconsin, and when it ceases operations this month, it will effectively end the state's 20-year history of parimutuel dog racing.

Greyhound tracks are illegal in Illinois, but at least 23 live tracks remain elsewhere in the United States, said Dairyland's executive vice president, Roy Berger. Remaining Midwest parks include Mystique in Dubuque and Bluffs Run Greyhound Park, also in Iowa. The most successful dog tracks have added casino games and gambling. Lacking state approval, Dairyland couldn't follow suit.
"Stand-alone greyhound tracks have gone the way of pay phones and eight-track cassettes," Berger said.

The Kenosha track's earnings have gone steadily downhill since 1994, the year that 900,000 customers visited the track. Attendance slipped to 233,300 by 2008 and is expected to drop an additional 19 percent by year's end, Berger said.

Greyhound advocates such as Swanson are concerned about whether track owners will provide temporary housing and care for the dogs after the last program on New Year's Eve.

About 600 of the lean, muscular dogs remain at the track's 12 kennels, overseen by trainers and a veterinarian. The dogs' private owners may take them home, send them to race at other parks or euthanize them. Most greyhounds, though, will be adopted out through organizations such as Swanson's.

Dairyland owners have offered incentives to dog owners to move them out by Feb. 5, prompting a call for urgency among greyhound agencies who say that is not long enough.

Berger insisted Monday that "the kennel compound will stay open until every greyhound is placed."

To prepare for the Dairyland closing, Swanson recently bought a used shuttle bus for $9,500, ripped out the passenger seats and replaced them with seven secured cages. She houses up to 15 greyhounds at a time in the kennel she built behind her home, distributing dogs that have been deemed healthy to 25 Chicago-area foster homes, where they will be prepared for adoption.

Early one recent day, she escorted five females, including Roxanne, into her bus for their visit to the veterinarian, where they would be spayed. She had dropped off seven males for neutering the day before.

"Our job starts where (the racetrack's) ends," said Sharon Horvat, of Plainfield, who whipped out a photo of her three "girls," all adopted from racetrack programs.

Greyhound fanatics describe the dogs as elegant couch potatoes, spending most of their days lounging. They enjoy being pampered with soft toys and blankets, and rarely bark. One misconception is that they require a lot of exercise, when a daily walk will do. They can be stubborn and require patience with training, Swanson said.

Swanson fell in love with the breed after her beagle mix died. She adopted Jake, a greyhound who rubbed her face with his own as an initial greeting, then started up the association with a friend.

The former plumber finds greyhound adoption to be a full-time effort. Midwest Greyhound is one of the few organizations nationally that accept dogs who have suffered traumatic injuries. During the races, the dogs chase mechanical prey, usually a stuffed rabbit, and are prone to leg injuries.

Each of the dogs must be "cat-tested" so that a family pet does not become prey. The greyhounds weigh 55 to 100 pounds, live to be 10 to 15 years old and are more muscular when used for racing, Swanson said.
They must be leashed or kept in a fenced yard whenever outdoors, she warned. The canines run up to 45 mph and can bound 17 feet, rendering an electronic fence ineffective if something moving catches their attention. It could be a rabbit -- but it could also be a plastic bag whipping across the lawn on a windy day.

Over the last 18 years, Swanson figures that she has placed more than 2,000 dogs in adoptive homes, requiring new owners to sign a lease that gives her permission to take them back if they do not take good care of them. That has happened once or twice, when the dogs kept getting loose.

"We need people to be sure to know the commitment it will take," she said. "It can't be a knee-jerk reaction."

Roxanne, for one, is now living with a foster mom, Marilyn Golz, whose family shares their River Grove home with three of their own greyhounds and three cats. Roxanne is "terrified of the outside world" but gets along well with the other pets, she said.

"She is a loving sweet little dog. She will be a wonderful animal for someone. She just needs a loving hand."

lblack@tribune.com
Curtain comes down on Wisconsin's failed dog-racing venture at Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha

Casinos factor in closing of venues in Wisconsin

By Andy Thompson
Post-Crescent community news editor

Wisconsin's greyhound racing industry, which was launched 20 years ago with great expectations, has ended with a whimper.

The closing of Dairyland Greyhound Park in Kenosha on Thursday was the last of the state's five dog tracks — including Fox Valley Greyhound Park in Kaukauna — to call it quits.

Industry observers and community leaders say the tracks struggled to compete against other forms of gambling, particularly Indian casinos, and were unable to remain financially viable over the long term.

"I don't think we're going to miss it," said state Rep. Dean Kaufert, R-Neenah, who occasionally patronized the Kaukauna track before it went dark in August 1983.

"It was hot for a while, then the luster kind of went away. The Native American casinos provided more action and (dog racing) kind of fell off to the wayside."

The Kaukauna dog track, an $18.5 million facility that opened in August 1990 at U.S. 41 and State 55, fared well during its first year of operation. But betting revenue and attendance declined over the next two years with the advent of casino gambling at Oneida.

Alternative uses were sought for the track, but nothing materialized. It was demolished in 2007.

"It never really caught on," said Ron Van De Hey, who was mayor of Kaukauna when the track was built with private funding. "It was popular for a while. It was nice, it was glitzy. But (the track) just couldn't sustain it."

Things were much different in 1989, when Kaukauna and four other communities were granted licenses for pari-mutuel racing.

"We were looking for economic development in Kaukauna," Van De Hey said. "What made it easy for us to support is the greyhound track owners put in all the infrastructure at no cost to the city."

Van De Hey said all five tracks had high hopes when dog racing began in Wisconsin in 1990.

"It was a great idea," he said. "Across the state, this was seen as creating jobs."

Van De Hey is convinced that casino gambling was the death knell for dog-racing. Gamblers preferred
the more fast-paced action of slot machines and blackjack over betting on a series of dog races, he said.

"(Casino gambling) got its legs shortly after licenses were issued for the greyhound tracks," Van De Hey said. "It was a more attractive form of gambling and it was clearly more appealing. You could get that instant gratification.

"I really think Indian gambling knocked it out."

Wisconsin and other states that offer dog racing have taken a hit from new trends in technology, said Marsha Kelly of St. Paul, Minn., a communications consultant for the American Greyhound Track Owners Association and the American Greyhound Council.

"I think times have changed in terms of the entertainment that the public looks for," she said. "We live in an age of high-tech and fast-paced gaming."

Kelly said the "competitive landscape" changed for Wisconsin's dog tracks with the advent of casinos and internet gambling.

"There's a lot of competition for the entertainment dollar in Wisconsin," she said. "And there's been a real change in the way people spend their entertainment dollars."

While dog racing failed in Wisconsin, it is holding its own in several states — especially Florida, where several tracks are operating effectively.

"I would say (the dog-racing industry) is in fair shape," Kelly said.

Kelly said there are "many healthy tracks in Florida" and mentioned West Virginia, Alabama and Texas as other states with solid operations.

"There are tracks that are doing well and some that are not doing so well," she said.

Kelly said the heyday for dog racing was in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Several tracks have closed since then, but the industry remains viable, she said.

"In a recession period, any kind of entertainment venue will really suffer," Kelly said.

Kelly added that Wisconsin's 20-year experience with dog racing is not typical.

"In some states, greyhound racing has lasted much longer than that," she said. "It's more entrenched in other states and they have a built-in capacity to stay in business."

Van De Hey said the history books will not be kind to the dog-racing venture in Wisconsin.

"It was the pari-mutuel industry versus the casinos and the casinos won," he said.
GREY2K USA

GREY2K USA is a national, non-profit greyhound protection organization. We are a network of humane-minded citizens who work to pass stronger greyhound protection laws and phase out dog racing. We also offer adoption referral information to help the thousands of greyhounds still racing.

For more information contact:

GREY2K USA
P.O. Box 442117
Somerville, MA 02144

866.247.3925
www.GREY2KUSA.org
E-mail: info@GREY2KUSA.org

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