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ABOUT AMY WORDEN. Amy Worden is a politics and government reporter for the Inquirer. In that capacity she has explored a range of animal issues from dog kennel law improvements and horse slaughter to the comeback of peregrine falcons and pigeon hunts. From hamsters to horses, animals have always been part of her life. Today Amy lives on an apple orchard near Gettysburg with her husband and a feline menagerie. A search is underway for the right "dawg" and they hope the barnyard will soon house endangered geese and other animals.

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2011

House panel approves greyhound simulcast ban

Pennsylvania has had a ban on greyhound racing since 2004.

Now a bill moving through the state House is targeting horse racetracks or other betting establishments which might consider running simulcasts of greyhound racing from the 19 surviving dogs tracks in the U.S.

House Bill 67, which unanimously passed the House Gaming Oversight Committee Tuesday, would bar simulcasts or live broadcasts of greyhound racing, a strategy that the shrinking greyhound racing industry is pushing as a way to increase profits at its dwindling number of tracks.

No horse tracks in Pennsylvania currently simulcast greyhound racing, nor have any sought to bring in greyhound broadcasts, said bill sponsor Rep. Curt Schroder (R., Chester).

Schroder, chairman of the gaming committee, said simulcasts are a bad idea because they expand gambling and because of the inhumane treatment of racing dogs at tracks and after their careers when most are destroyed.

"There are a lot of problems in the greyhound racing industry," said Schroder. "The dogs are often abused and live in deplorable conditions. Dozens of greyhounds died recently at a Florida track. My legislation will mean that Pennsylvania will not support this industry or further expansion of gambling in the Commonwealth."

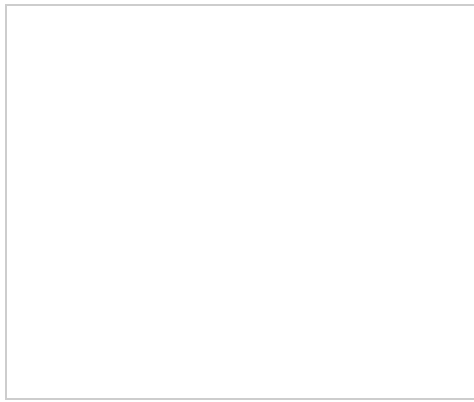
Sarah Speed, Pennsylvania director for the Humane Society of the United States, testified at a hearing last week that 19,000 greyhounds were destroyed in 2000, including puppies deemed unfit for racing and adults - most only three years old - considered washed up on the track.

There are no known breeding kennels of racing greyhounds in Pennsylvania, according to the Department of Agriculture.

A similar bill sponsored by Sen. Stewart Greenleaf (R., Montgomery) cleared the Senate last session and was approved by Schroder's committee before getting stuck in the House Appropriations Committee for reasons Schroder does not understand. It's not clear if the bill will go back to appropriations or move directly to the House floor this time around.

Under HB 67, anyone found to be in violation of the law could face civil penalties of up to \$10,000.

Philadelphia is home to the National Greyhound Adoption Program, one of the largest greyhound adoption centers. Schroder himself just adopted his second retired greyhound in November. Her name: "Hello Kitty."



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