



Dept. of Racing could have final say at Tucson Greyhound Park

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By JD Wallace - bio | email

TUCSON, AZ (Tucson News Now) - The death of a dog during a race at Tucson Greyhound Park about a week ago prompted requests from Tucson News Now to the Arizona Department of Racing for copies of kennel disposition logs and the track roster. Such requests could show when dogs are injured, adopted, or put down. But the department said that it doesn't maintain those records.

"They deliberately do not inquire so they don't have to give the information out to the public," said Susan Via, a greyhound welfare advocate who led the initiative in South Tucson to outlaw injecting dogs with steroids, which voters approved. But five years later, the state Department of Racing said that kind of regulation is a decision that only the department can make, and South Tucson agreed.

She said that a bill that has passed the state Senate and is headed to the state House of Representatives would make that pre-emption of local authority official and make the track off-limits to city or county authorities such as Pima Animal Care.

"There's nothing South Tucson, or the county, or even PAC could do, as a county agency, to go in as a county agency PAC could no longer go in and investigate any complaints of dogs being left without veterinary care, dogs without water, dogs that are sick, dogs that are injured, dogs that are dead," Via said.

But the bill can still change. Representative Ethan Orr said that he thinks that he can remove not only the increase in authority that the bill gives the department, but also increase the department's accountability.

"Anytime you get information out, you're not only making the racing more viable but you're protecting the dogs and frankly, the people that work at the dog track. And so, one of the additional things that I'm going to push for in the bill will be increased reporting requirements as to the steroid use, the injury and death of the dogs," Orr said.

Orr said that the bill could be in front of the House next week. The director of the Department of Racing said that the department cannot take a position on proposed legislation. Tucson Greyhound Park general manager Dale Popp is out of town through the end of the week.

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