

MY VIEW

Would you treat your dog that way?

By **CHRISTINE A. DORCHAK**

A greyhound named Starz Voice broke her elbow while racing at Raynham-Taunton Greyhound Park this June. Only 2 years old, she was ordered destroyed at "her trainer's request." She joined 11 other injured dogs whose careers ended when they broke their legs at Raynham-Taunton Greyhound Park that month.

Now more than ever, this cruelty must end. Sandwich resident Carter Luke, chief executive officer of the MSPCA-Angell, serves on the new ballot initiative committee seeking to end dog racing in Massachusetts.

"This is an animal protection issue," he says. "Along with cats, dogs are the closest domestic partners we have. Like other dogs, greyhounds deserve loving homes and not to be treated like financial commodities."

According to newly available state records, more than 700 greyhounds have been injured while racing in Massachusetts in the past five years. Injuries included broken bones, cardiac arrest, seizures and paralysis.

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■ Carolina Alarm had a heart attack and died on Oct. 18, 2002, at Raynham-Taunton Greyhound Park. She was 3 years old.

■ Mesa Tony was "degloved" and had his tail amputated on Jan. 24, 2003.

■ On New Year's Eve 2004, a dog named Echo broke his leg and was ordered destroyed.

■ The next day, 2-year-old Hibbert had the right side of his skull crushed in.

■ In August 2006, Renkar suffered a head trauma and died on the first turn of his race at Wonderland Greyhound Park.

■ In May 2007, six dogs suffered career-ending broken bones and dislocations at Raynham.

■ Four more dogs, 2 and 3 years old, also broke their legs at Wonderland in June.

Thanks to an open-records law

passed by the Legislature, track injury documentation is now available to the public for the first time. Today, voters can look at the tracks' own logs and decide what is best for dogs.

When not racing, dogs are confined in small cages barely large enough for them to stand up or turn around. Greyhounds are turned out for short periods of time, but on average spend 18 to 22 hours each day in warehouse-style kennels. This routine gives them little ability to interact with people or other dogs.

The question humane-minded voters must ask themselves is, "Would I treat my dog this way?"

Finally, this is also a taxpayer issue. In the past three fiscal years alone, the Massachusetts State Racing Commission has redirected nearly \$5 million into special maintenance funds to keep these private businesses alive. Every dollar that is spent through these funds is money that was once paid as pari-mutuel tax to the state.

In fiscal 2006, the latest year for which figures are available, more than \$700,000 was set aside for advertising and construction at Raynham-Taunton Greyhound Park. Wonderland's trust fund held more than \$400,000 - three-

fourths of which was earmarked for capital improvements at the aging facility. These statutory trust funds provide just one example of the special treatment that racetracks have received, and will continue to receive, until dog racing is rightfully ended in the state.

Seven years ago, a group of dog lovers came together to help greyhounds. Now these same dog lovers are joined by the oldest animal protection groups in the state, including the MSPCA. The Humane Society of the United States is also part of a growing coalition supporting the Greyhound Protection Act of 2008. The goal of the campaign is to phase out dog racing in Massachusetts by the year 2010.

The Committee to Protect Dogs asks for your support of this important initiative. It is time to save thousands of greyhound dogs from cruelty and confinement. As Carter Luke puts it, "It's just the right thing to do."

For more information and to volunteer, please go to www.protectdogs.org.

Christine A. Dorchak of Arlington is co-chairwoman of the Committee to Protect Dogs and president of Grey2K.USA.