



# Greyhound racing industry hit with doping, cruelty, collusion allegations

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**Allegations of widespread doping, animal cruelty and collusion in Australia's multi-billion-dollar greyhound racing industry have been uncovered by a 7.30 investigation.**

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**PHOTO:** Australia's greyhound industry is the third biggest in the world. (AFP: Robyn Beck, file photo)

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Australia's greyhound industry is the third biggest in the world, and each year Australians wager about \$3 billion on the sport.

In the past year more than 70 dogs have tested positive to banned substances, but insiders say many more cheats go undetected and use popular drugs including cocaine, amphetamines, caffeine and EPO, the performance-enhancing hormone favoured by disgraced cyclist Lance Armstrong.

The relentless quest to produce a winner has also led to massive over-breeding, which results in up to 17,000 dogs being killed each year, some by inhumane means.

Many trainers are also in open revolt at greyhound racing authorities, who they say favour the richest players and hand down inconsistent punishments.

Sydney trainer Christos Arletos has been racing greyhounds for 25 years and says there "never was, and never will be" a level playing field.

"Eighty per cent of greyhound trainers are looking for something to dope their dogs," he said.

"I can't compete with the high quality of drugs when they use them."

Whistleblower and vet Ted Humphries, who sparked an inquiry into the industry, says cocaine is a popular choice among cheats.

"The most common way [for cocaine to] be administered is just before the animal starts to race. It would either be administered by a sneaky injection or by wiping the powder on the animal's mucus membrane or gums," he said.

"The improvement is quite remarkable. These drugs are stimulatory and it will make a greyhound do its utmost to win."

One of the sport's rising stars, Mark Azzopardi, was recently handed a two-year disqualification after his dog, Transcend Time, tested positive to cocaine at a race at Maitland in the NSW Hunter region in March.

Azzopardi has told 7.30 he is devastated by the result. He insists the dog was contaminated by an employee who had snorted the drug beforehand.

"I searched high and low trying to search for an answer and, luckily, the guy who was giving me a hand, he's come forward and says he's been using cocaine as a recreational thing and it could have been from him," he said.

"It's the only thing we could find because I sure as hell have never or don't dope my greyhounds. My record speaks for itself."

Greyhound Racing NSW has rejected Azzopardi's application for an appeal.

When 7.30 visited the trainer, he still had dogs worth up to \$100,000 at his property, despite a directive to move them on.

## Leading trainer disqualified over drugs claims

7.30 understands some vet clinics are supplying drugs. Vet Rob Zammit says his Sydney clinic has been approached by trainers looking to buy EPO.

"We don't even stock it, but they're obviously out there hunting for it so they can use it for their animals because it's harder to find on the swab," he said.

Racing authorities across Australia have been tightening their drug testing regimes. On Monday, they claimed their biggest scalp.

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Ted Humphries

One of the world's leading trainers, Graeme Bate, was disqualified for nine months by Victorian racing authorities, sending shockwaves through the industry.

The veteran trainer's dog, Gunda Bale, tested positive to an elevated testosterone level at a meeting at Geelong in March.

Bate had previously recorded four positive swabs but until this week had only ever received a fine.

He is appealing against the severity of the punishment and is expected to win a stay on the proceedings, allowing him to compete for \$350,000 next month in the world's richest greyhound race, the Melbourne Cup.

## Calls for overhaul of anti-doping regime

The industry has been plagued by scandal and misconduct for decades.

In 2003, former NSW chief steward Rodney Potter was sent to jail for more than two years for switching dog urine samples in exchange for tens of thousands of dollars in bribes from trainers.

The corruption was exposed in an inquiry sparked by Dr Humphries, but he says little has changed in the intervening decade and the anti-doping regime remains inadequate.

"Greyhound Racing NSW needs to be overhauled," Dr Humphries said.

Dr Humphries sat on the NSW greyhounds veterinary advisory committee until two years ago.

During one meeting attended by Greyhound Racing NSW chiefs and stewards in 2009, he says a lab analyst openly offered to falsify test results.

"When an analyst makes a statement, 'You tell us which swabs you want made negative and we're happy to make them negative', that's I think a fair indictment of the system," he said.

He says many race officials are too close to the competitors they are being paid to police.

"Many of the officials are known to be heavy gamblers," he said.

"The stewards themselves have no formal qualifications ... and yet they decide the fate of many."

# Claims of obstruction at Greyhound Racing

Former NSW ombudsman and chief magistrate David Landa was appointed in 2011 to examine claims of misconduct as the sport's NSW auditor general.

But he quit in disgust last year at what he described as an unworkable and compromised situation.

In comments to Four Corners that were not broadcast, he said: "I was obstructed almost from the start with Greyhound Racing. They simply did not want oversight.

"Apart from the role being ineffective and not capable of performing what I felt the legislators may have intended, it was a fiction and it was a fraud really on the public," he said.

"[The public was] led to believe that there was an integrity auditor capable of dealing with issues that ought to be dealt with - matters of integrity, matters of honesty, matters of fair dealing - and those powers were not able to be performed."

After resigning, Mr Landa wrote to NSW Racing Minister George Souris offering his advice to help fix the situation.

"My greatest surprise is that there seems to have been no reaction from the Minister, or no desire expressed by the Minister to even be debriefed on the reasons, or to discuss what perhaps needs to be done," Mr Landa said.

The Minister has declined to comment.

## Animal welfare concerns

The industry is also under pressure over animal welfare concerns.

Dogs that are injured on the track are often killed. Thousands more never even make it that far because they are not cut out for racing.

They become what the industry calls wastage. Many are euthanised; animal welfare advocates say others are shot dead or get a hammer to the head.

Industry insiders have told 7.30 unwanted puppies are sometimes drowned.

RSPCA scientific officer Dr Jade Norris says the relentless quest for a winner has created a massive breeding industry.

"We know thousands of greyhounds are born every year that are surplus to industry requirements," she said.

"In fact, about 40 per cent of greyhounds born every year in Australia will actually never go on to race.

"That's a very high wastage rate and it's an unacceptable wastage rate. The RPSCA believes urgent action must be taken to reduce this massive over-breeding problem that leads to high wastage rates and also high euthanasia rates."

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Jade Norris

Greyhound Racing NSW estimates 3,000 greyhounds are euthanised each year in that state alone, a figure the RSPCA takes as a minimum.

"It is possible that is an underestimate," Dr Norris said.

"There's a lack of national published data so we don't have exact euthanasia figures to draw from. That's another problem with the industry, this lack of transparency, but we do have enough evidence to know the euthanasia problem is very serious.

"High euthanasia rates are unacceptable and urgent action needs to be taken to reduce them."

Greyhound Racing NSW declined a request for an interview, but issued a statement to 7.30 denying allegations of animal cruelty.