

## Dog imports to controversial Macau track see big drop

Sunday, 06 October, 2013, 12:00am  
News › Hong Kong SPORT

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*Animal welfare groups hope trend means controversial venue set to close down soon*

The number of greyhounds being imported to Macau to race at its dog track has fallen dramatically this year amid speculation it may soon cease operations.

In the eight months to the end of August, only 110 greyhounds were imported, compared with 248 in the same period last year and 228 in the first eight months of 2011, according to Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

All the greyhounds at the Canidrome - about 800 at a time - are imported from Australia via Hong Kong. A total of 378 dogs were imported to Macau last year to replace dogs destroyed by lethal injection when they could no longer race.

Animal-welfare groups want the Canidrome closed down, as it euthanises all its greyhounds once their short racing careers are over - usually within two or three years of arriving in Macau. Dogs are put down at the rate of about 30 a month. The arena has repeatedly rebuffed appeals for some greyhounds to be adopted to homes in Macau or Hong Kong when they stop racing.

An international campaign by animal-welfare groups was launched to close the Canidrome after an investigation in 2011 by *Post Magazine*.

Nearly all the dogs are healthy and only five or six years old when euthanised - usually after failing to be placed in two or three consecutive races.

The Canidrome did not respond to requests for comment. But animal-welfare groups say they hope the trend of fewer dog imports indicates a winding down of the venue before its land lease expires in 2015.

Greyhounds are sold to individuals for up to HK\$50,000 each when they arrive from Australia but never leave the Canidrome.

Both the Australian government and its greyhound-racing body denied any knowledge of the drop in dog exports to Macau in the past year.

Asked if any restriction had been imposed on exports, an Australian government spokesman said:

"This is not something the Department of Agriculture is aware of and is not anything we are introducing."

Craig Taberner, chief executive officer of Greyhounds Australasia, said in an e-mail reply: "I have been on leave and am not aware of the figures you are referring to; nor can I speculate on why demand for Australian greyhounds has dropped in Macau."

Greyhounds Australasia has told animal-welfare groups it is concerned about the treatment of dogs at the Canidrome but has so far resisted appeals to halt exports to the city.

Carey Theil, executive director of GREY2K USA, which has pushed for the arena's closure, said: "With so few dogs being imported, our hope is that the Canidrome will not last much longer."

**More on this:** [50 years in operation for Macau's canidrome for greyhound races](#) [1]  
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