

BLOGS Home / News / Local

8 greyhounds die on trip; haulers fined, suspended

Story

Josh Brodesky Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Wednesday, December 15, 2010 12:00 am

Eight greyhounds died in early September, likely of heat exhaustion, while being hauled across the country to Arizona, documents from the state's Department of Racing show.

The haulers, Lonnie and Jamie Boyle, were recently suspended for 30 days and fined \$500 each for failing to properly care for 27 greyhounds during the move.

The eight greyhounds likely died near El Paso, documents show. The couple traveled through Tucson with the dead dogs, but never stopped at Tucson Greyhound Park to look into veterinary care for the surviving dogs, documents say.

Lonnie Boyle told an investigator with the state's Department of Racing he did not want the surviving dogs to be quarantined. They instead traveled on to a farm in the city of Maricopa, just outside of Phoenix.

It's unclear if the eight dead dogs were destined to race at Tucson Greyhound Park.

Track manager Tom Taylor said the deaths have absolutely nothing to do with Tucson Greyhound Park. He said the 27 dogs were destined for a number of different locations. Some would race at Tucson Greyhound Park; others were scheduled to race at a track in Tijuana, Mexico. Still others were female dogs that were going to have pups.

Arizona Department of Racing Director Lonny Powell declined to comment because he will likely hear the case in the future.

The deaths have stirred opponents of greyhound racing. Carey M. Theil, executive director of the nonprofit Grey 2k USA, which requested the documents about the dead dogs, thought the penalty was far too lenient, and he hoped Powell would stiffen the penalty.

"A 30-day suspension, and a \$500 fine, for the death of eight dogs. That to me would be unconscionable," Theil said. "I would find that penalty very hard to believe."

While Theil acknowledged there was no direct connection to Tucson Greyhound Park, he said the facility has become increasingly isolated as more and more dog tracks shut down across the country, including Phoenix Greyhound Park. This isolation means dogs are being hauled long distances to get to Arizona, and that will only mean more overheating deaths for dogs, he said.

Lonnie Boyle told investigators he and his wife were driving from Oklahoma City to a farm outside of Phoenix in early September, according to reports. For the most part, he said they stopped to check on the dogs every four hours, as the state's administrative code outlines. Boyle claimed a rainstorm kept him from checking on the dogs during one stretch, but the investigator saw no evidence of any severe weather. Also, the stated drive times did not support the Boyles' story, the report says.

"The evidence does not support that they drove through severe rainstorms," the report says. "However, evidence does show hot weather and high humidity, which is a factor in the death of the dogs."

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