

Greyhounds Australasia bans racing dog exports to Macau track

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Australian body halts supply of racing dogs to Macau, citing inadequate care

Australia's leading greyhound racing body has banned the export of dogs to Macau in a move that could threaten the future of the controversial Canidrome track.

Greyhounds Australasia has stopped issuing so-called "greyhound passports" to dogs being sent to Macau because it "does not support the export of greyhounds to any country that does not meet contemporary animal welfare standards" .

Australia is the sole source of greyhounds at the Canidrome in Macau and the ban, imposed in March last year but only made public at a parliamentary committee in New South Wales last week, explains a drop in greyhound imports to Macau in 2013.

The number of greyhounds imported to Macau from Australia fell by 50 per cent in the first 10 months of last year compared to the same period a year earlier.

Animal welfare groups want the Canidrome closed down because it euthanises all its greyhounds once their short racing careers are over - usually within two to three years of arriving in Macau. Most dogs put down by lethal injection are healthy and five to six years old.

An international campaign by animal welfare groups was launched to close the Canidrome after a 2011 *Post Magazine* investigation revealed dogs were being put down at the rate of nearly one a day. With no hope of a life after racing, 383 were killed in 2010.

Greyhounds are sold to individual owners for up to HK\$50,000 each when they arrive from Australia but never leave the Canidrome arena as there are no arrangements in place for them to be adopted once they retire from racing.

The ban on greyhound imports by Greyhounds Australia is not legally binding and members can flout the regulation and continue exports if they choose. The Canidrome may also be able to source greyhounds from unlicensed breeders.

The move was welcomed by Carey Theil, executive director of GREY2K USA.

"We now know that even the greyhound racing industry is turning its back on the Canidrome because of track policies that are cruel and inhumane," he said.

"This rejection by the racing industry should send a clear message to the government that the Canidrome is not viable. It's time to let the land lease end, and move beyond this sad chapter in Macau's history.

"We will now work with animal protection groups in Australia to find out how greyhounds are being shipped to the Canidrome, despite the ban that has been imposed by Greyhounds Australasia."

Greyhounds Australasia, which in October said it did not know why exports of dogs to Macau had fallen, did not respond to requests for comment.
