

[ EDITORIAL ]

## **Greyhound Electrocuting: Ensure Racing-Dog Safety**

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The mechanical lure that greyhounds chase around a racetrack should be safe. So why are some dogs dying in grisly collisions with this machinery and the electrical wiring that feeds it?

Perhaps these fatalities are deemed too rare — headlines tend to refer to them as freak accidents — to drive reforms. But news reports over the past decade indicate they've happened at several dog tracks in Florida and across the nation.

The Sarasota Kennel Club is among them, apparently.

The Sarasota Herald-Tribune reports that electrocution is the presumed cause of a greyhound death that occurred during a February race there. The month before, another greyhound died during a race — the cause was not determined but electrocution was considered a possibility.

Elsewhere, news reports cite cases in which greyhounds were killed by contact with track wiring or by impact in collisions with the lures.

These deaths are disturbing, in part because they involve equipment to which greyhounds are frequently exposed during their racing careers.

### IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Beset by complaints from anti-cruelty activists, and by cases of abuse and neglect of racing dogs, the greyhound industry has made efforts to improve its record.

Spokesmen insist that dogs are responsibly treated and that retired greyhounds are now adopted out as much as possible. Yet the sport remains mired in controversy.

Down on the track, meanwhile, dogs hurtle through their own game of chance — a high-speed one in which serious muscle and bone injuries are not uncommon. Often these stem from dogs bumping into each other as they rush around the curves.

While such pileups may be hard to prevent, that should not be the case when it comes to electrocutions and mechanical accidents. Properly designed, operated and maintained equipment should eliminate most of these risks.

Progress was made May 1 when the Florida Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering established a new Animal Welfare Rule. It details a strict set of standards for the dogs' care at and around the tracks. The rule takes effect Tuesday.

Florida should ensure that racing dogs are protected in every aspect.

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