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GREY2K USA

June 23, 2009

The Providence Journal
72 Fountain Street
Providence, RI 02902

Dear Editor,

August 8 will be the very best day ever for Rhode Island's greyhounds. On that day, if common sense and compassion prevail, the old Lincoln Park (now known as Twin River) will hold its last commercial dog race. As has already happened in Maine, Vermont, Connecticut and soon Massachusetts, the cruelty of dog racing will end in yet another New England State. New Hampshire is close to reaching the same decision even as this letter is written.

At remaining tracks nationwide, greyhounds live confined in small, stacked cages which are barely large enough for them to stand up or turn around. On average, greyhounds spend twenty hours a day in these cages. They lay all day long in shredded paper or on carpet scraps, with no enrichments or toys.

To save expense, the diet of greyhound dogs is based on raw, "4-D" meat. This is a USDA classification for the meat of dying, disabled, diseased or dead livestock which has been deemed unfit for human consumption. Greyhound trainers provide a ready market for these slaughterhouse castoffs and as a result, greyhounds are regularly exposed to live pathogens such as salmonella and E.coli. In April 2003, one thousand dogs at Lincoln Park became so ill that the track was closed during a four-week quarantine. Similar outbreaks occurred in 1999 and 1992.

Perhaps most troubling, these gentle friends face the risk of serious injury each day they are let out of their cages to race. According to records available from most racing states, hundreds of dogs are injured at every operating track each year. The most commonly reported injuries are broken legs. Dogs also suffer paralysis, head trauma, seizures and death by cardiac arrest.

In the early twentieth century when dog racing was first introduced in Hialeah, Florida, perhaps betting on dogs may have seemed like harmless fun. It certainly could not have been predicted that these dogs – the second fastest animals on earth – would be so exploited for their speed.

The wanton disposal of losing dogs, their use in medical experimentation and the many other atrocities these dogs continue to suffer, have rightfully led to the closure of half of the network of dog tracks which once crisscrossed this nation. Accordingly, membership in the National Greyhound Association, consisting of dog owners and trainers, went from a peak of 7,052 in 1989 to 1,851 as of this month.

The financial realities of tracks like Twin River demonstrate that ending dog racing is also a taxpayer issue. Even during the previous, more profitable decade, the live wagering "handle" or total amount wagered fell a catastrophic 77 per cent at Lincoln Park. Gambling expansion at the facility, which started in 1992 with an initial allotment of 1,200 slot machines (now grown to 4,700), have done nothing to change this trend.

Despite this fact, kennel operators continue to receive a percentage of all slot machine bets, amounting to millions of dollar in subsidies each year. From 1993-2003, such "purse supplements" totaled \$84 million! So it's no wonder that dog racing proponents have pressured state lawmakers to force Twin River to keep the gravy train of live racing running.

Rhode Island's only dog track now reports a loss of \$10 million annually on dog racing and bases part of its current restructuring plans on stopping this cruelty. Here's to that happy day!

For more information on greyhound racing, go to www.GREY2KUSA.org.

Sincerely,

Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.
President

PROTECTING GREYHOUNDS NATIONWIDE

P.O. Box 442117
Somerville, MA 02144
866-247-3925 ♦ 617-666-3568 (fax)
www.grey2kusa.org
info@grey2kusa.org