



## GREYHOUNDS SUFFER SERIOUS INJURIES WHILE RACING

### Thousands of dogs are injured at racetracks each year

At dog tracks nationwide, greyhounds routinely suffer serious injuries. From January 2008 through December 2015, a total of 13,274 greyhound injuries have been documented. The most commonly reported injury was a broken leg. Other injuries included head trauma, electrocution, and broken backs.

- At two West Virginia dog tracks, 6,636 greyhound injuries were reported between January 2008 and October 2015.<sup>1</sup> During the same period, 343 dogs died or were euthanized.<sup>2</sup>
- At Southland Greyhound Park in Arkansas, 867 greyhound injuries were reported between January 2008 and September 2015, including at least 35 dogs that died or were euthanized.<sup>3</sup>
- At Tucson Greyhound Park in Arizona, 462 greyhound injuries were reported from 2008, 2009 and June 2013 through October 2015, including at least 19 dogs that died or were euthanized.<sup>4</sup>



*The final race of Crystal B. Disco, who died in 2011 after she struck the rail with her forehead. Still image from a video by Sanford Orlando Kennel Club*

Greyhounds also suffer injuries in unofficial schooling races and training activities, but these injuries are not always reported on state injury forms.

The remaining two states with active dog tracks, Alabama and Florida, do not report greyhound injuries to the public. This is a notable omission because almost two-thirds of all operational dog tracks in the US are located in Florida. Minimal injury data is available through Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) investigative files, death notifications, and inspection reports. An examination of these records identified 199 greyhound injuries between 2008 and 2015, including at least 137 dogs that died or were euthanized.

### **Injury reports document greyhounds who suffered and died**

At least 952 racing greyhounds have died since 2008, including 801 injured dogs. For example:

- On March 22, 2014 a one-year-old light fawn greyhound named HK Cream hit the rail and died on impact during a race at Southland Greyhound Park in Arkansas.<sup>5</sup>
- A two-year-old white and black greyhound named SE's Angel Fire was euthanized after breaking her back during a race at Mardi Gras Racetrack in West Virginia on March 21, 2013.<sup>6</sup>
- On June 9, 2012 a one-and-a-half-year-old red brindle greyhound named SH Transporter was euthanized after breaking his right front leg during a race at Dubuque Greyhound Park in Iowa. He had to be carried off the track.<sup>7</sup>

1 Dr. Lori Bohenko, *Wheeling Island Racetrack Veterinary Report*, (Charleston WV: West Virginia Racing Commission, 2008-2015); Dr. Mark D. Webster, *Veterinary emergencies, scratches, and racers inactivated due to track injuries at Mardi Gras Casino & Resort* (Charleston WV: West Virginia Racing Commission, 2008-2015); analysis by GREY2K USA (This analysis does not include eight months of injury data that GREY2K USA was unable to obtain from the West Virginia Racing Commission).

2 *Ibid.*

3 Arkansas State Racing Commission, *Southland Injury Report* (West Memphis, AR: 2008-2010); Arkansas State Racing Commission, *Injuries 2011-2015* (West Memphis, AR: 2011-2014); analysis by GREY2K USA.

4 Arizona Department of Racing, *Greyhound Injury Statistics* (Phoenix, AZ: 2008-2009, 2013-2015); analysis by GREY2K USA.

5 Arkansas Racing Commission, *Injuries 2014* (West Memphis, AR: Arkansas Racing Commission, April 17, 2014); "Pedigree of HK Cream," Greyhound Data, <http://www.greyhound-data.com/d?i=2005881> (accessed June 6, 2014).

6 "Pedigree of SE's Angel Fire," *Greyhound-Data*, <http://greyhound-data.com/d?i=1811824> (accessed April 11, 2014); Dr. Mark D. Webster, *Veterinary emergencies, scratches, and racers inactivated due to track injuries at Mardi Gras Casino & Resort during March 2013*, West Virginia Racing Commission (Charleston WV: April 11, 2013).

7 "Pedigree of SH Transporter," *Greyhound-Data*, <http://greyhound-data.com/d?i=1865127> (accessed April 11, 2014); Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission, *Dubuque Greyhound Park Mishap Report* (Des Moines, IA: 2012).

## Academic research on track design and condition

Several scholarly studies have examined the impact of track design and condition on racing greyhound injuries.

- A study of five greyhound tracks in Wisconsin found that speed, race distance, and track turns all had an effect on orthopedic injury rates. Specifically, researchers found that race distances of 7/16 and 3/16 mile had the greatest incident of injury and concluded that longer races may lead to injuries if a dog were not properly trained for such distance.<sup>8</sup>

The first turn was the most likely location where a dog suffered an injury, which researchers did not find surprising due to the “speed and congestion” at that point in the track.<sup>9</sup>

The track with the greatest number of injuries in the study differed from the other tracks in that it had steeper banks in its turns and a small turning radius in the second turn, suggesting these track design features contributed to its injury rate.<sup>10</sup>

- Researchers in the United Kingdom concluded that “changes in track maintenance, aimed at keeping track condition (going) slower, may reduce injury rate with consequent benefit to the welfare of racing greyhounds.”<sup>11</sup>
- Researchers from Massey University in New Zealand conducted a five year study and found that injuries were a significant contributor to the end of dogs’ racing careers:

“We identified that **hock injuries were the single most important cause of catastrophic failure and dog loss.** The combination of training practices, questionable feeding practices, and the suspicion of stress induced fractures was also a significant cause of dog loss.”<sup>12</sup>

## The industry uses misleading information to minimize greyhound injuries

The industry compares the rate of injuries to the number of “starts,” the total number of times a greyhound starts a race. In using this metric, the industry counts the same dogs repeatedly, creating the impression that a much larger number of dogs are competing than actually are.<sup>13</sup> As a result, they are able to claim that the injury risk individual dogs face is lower than it actually is.

*Last Updated on March 7, 2016*

8 G.K. Sicard, K. Short and P.A. Manley, “A survey of injuries at five greyhound racing tracks,” *Journal of Small Animal Practice* 40 (1999): 428-32

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Joanne Iddon, Richard H. Lockyer and Stephen P. Freen, “The effect of season and track condition on injury rate in racing greyhounds,” *Journal of Small Animal Practice* (2014). This article was an early view, meaning it was an “Online Version of Record published before inclusion in an issue.”

12 Nick Cave, Elwyn Firth and Devon Thompson, “Does the asymmetric modeling of the Central Tarsal Bone in racing greyhounds occur rapidly during training, or develop during the racing career?”, Massey University, <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/College%20of%20Sciences/IVABS/Equine%20Trust/NZRB7.pdf?214D385DFBDA4D1858E73E3DCE2B26C1> (accessed June 4, 2014).

13 Sally Briggs, “Greyhound racing opponents distort facts,” *Galveston County Daily News*, March 27, 2013, [http://www.galvestondailynews.com/opinion/guest\\_columns/article\\_c7246896-969a-11e2-92ed-001a4bcf6878.html?success=2](http://www.galvestondailynews.com/opinion/guest_columns/article_c7246896-969a-11e2-92ed-001a4bcf6878.html?success=2) (accessed June 4, 2014).