



STEROID USE IN GREYHOUNDS

Female greyhounds are routinely given anabolic steroids

Female greyhounds are routinely given anabolic steroids to disrupt estrus. Estrus is the natural “heat” cycle for females.

This common industry practice serves to prevent the loss of race days for female greyhounds. According to the industry handbook *Care of the Racing & Retired Greyhound*, trainers “should note that the full estrus cycle ... from start to finish lasts 15 weeks ... and, of this time, the bitch can race or trial only for the second 3-week stage.”¹ To avoid this down time, the use of steroids in female greyhounds has become ubiquitous.

Greyhounds can also be given anabolic steroids to enhance performance. According to Dr. Richard Sams of the University of Florida Racing Laboratory, anabolic steroids such as Stanozolol would be “excellent” for enhancing performance.²

Anabolic steroids are harmful to greyhounds

According to the American Greyhound Council’s handbook *Care of the Racing & Retired Greyhound*, anabolic steroids can cause serious side effects. These include:

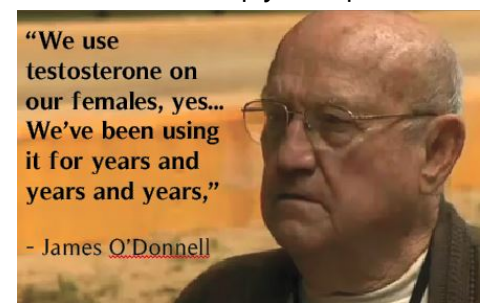
- Increased aggression which can result in fighting during trialing and racing;
- Increased weight due to water retention;
- Occasional loss of vigor;
- Virilization.³

However, nowhere in the book do the authors recommend halting the medication. On the contrary, they state, “If the bitch has an adverse reaction to either [steroid] ... then one should change to the opposite form of medication.”⁴

US tracks and trainers repeatedly ignore steroid bans and restrictions

Industry participants have repeatedly avoided or ignored steroid bans and restrictions:

- In 2008, South Tucson voters passed the Tucson Dog Protection Act. This measure in part prohibited the dosing of female greyhounds with anabolic steroids. To comply, the track veterinarian simply transported the dogs into Tucson, a separate incorporated municipality, and continued the practice of administering anabolic steroids.⁵
- In August 2013, Florida greyhound trainer James O’Donnell was found in possession of steroid paraphernalia. He later admitted that “[w]e’ve been using [testosterone] for years and years.”⁶
- In December 2013, an Alabama greyhound trainer was fined for possession of drug paraphernalia. One of the confiscated medications was testosterone.⁷



James “Barney” O’Donnell. Still image from a video by CBS Miami, 2014.

Steroid use in racing greyhounds has been prohibited or restricted in other countries

Anabolic steroid use – and in many cases specifically testosterone – has come under fire in other countries. In 2010, the Anti-Doping and Medication Control Review Board evaluated Great Britain's medication and drug policies for racing greyhounds. On the use of testosterone to suppress a bitch's "heat," the Board wrote, "We can see no justification, on ethical or welfare grounds, for the use of an androgenic ('masculinising') drug in a racing bitch and urge that the use of testosterone be prohibited as soon as possible."⁸

Greyhounds Australasia, which makes racing rules and recommendations to Australian states and territories, as well as New Zealand, considers testosterone "a 'prohibited substance' as defined by the National Racing rules" and allows only a threshold of "10 nanograms per milliliter in a sample of urine" for naturally occurring versions of it.⁹

Taking this ban one step further, the New Zealand Greyhound Racing Association has prohibited "[a]ll forms of steroids" and established penalties for greyhound test positives which include a one-year disqualification and/or fine of \$6,000.¹⁰

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain no longer includes testosterone on its "List of Permitted Treatments."¹¹

¹ Linda L. Blythe et al., *Care of the Racing and Retired Greyhound* (Topeka: American Greyhound Council Inc., 2007), 166.

² Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering, *Investigative Report No. 2009043310* (Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, February 26, 2010).

³ Linda L. Blythe et al., *Care of the Racing and Retired Greyhound* (Topeka: American Greyhound Council Inc., 2007), 167.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Darren DaRonco, "City bans dog steroid injections as way to thwart greyhound track," *Arizona Daily Star*, September 12, 2012, http://tucson.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/city-bans-dog-steroid-injections-as-way-to-thwart-greyhound/article_1f7ba6cc-e954-5b8b-b8bc-eb614ba09f10.html (accessed June 16, 2014).

⁶ Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering, *Investigative Report No. 2013036828* (Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, November 21, 2013).

⁷ Birmingham Racing Commission, *Ruling No. AL16917* (Birmingham, AL: Birmingham Racing Commission, December 16, 2013).

⁸ Independent Anti-Doping and Medication Control Review, *Report of Current GBGB Anti-doping and Medication Rules and their Implementation* (London: Greyhound Board of Great Britain, 2010), 24.

⁹ Greyhounds Australasia, *Greyhounds Australasia Rules* (Springvale: Greyhounds Australasia, 2012).

¹⁰ New Zealand Greyhound Racing Association, "Categories of Prohibited Substances," *Rules and Policies* (Lower Hutt: New Zealand Greyhound Racing Association, 2014).

¹¹ Greyhound Board of Great Britain, *A Trainer's Guide to Medication Control in Greyhounds* (London: Greyhound Board of Great Britain, 2014).

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