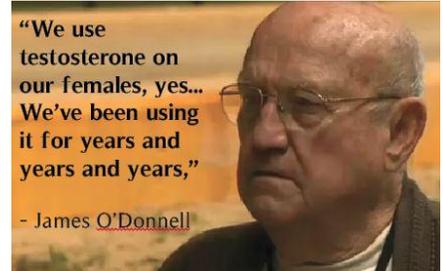


STEROID USE IN GREYHOUNDS

Female greyhounds are routinely given anabolic steroids

In the United States, female racing greyhounds are routinely given anabolic steroids like testosterone or synthetic versions of testosterone to disrupt the natural "heat" cycle. This common industry practice serves to prevent the loss of race days. According to *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 racing greyhounds has become ubiquitous.



"We use testosterone on our females, yes... We've been using it for years and years and years,"

- James O'Donnell

James "Barney" O'Donnell. Still image from a video by CBS Miami, 2014.

Anabolic steroids are harmful to greyhounds

The greyhound industry has documented the potentially harmful effects of anabolic steroids, but participants administer them anyway. According to the American Greyhound Council's handbook *Care of the Racing & Retired Greyhound*, anabolic steroids can cause serious side effects including increased aggression and virilization.² Steroid use has been shown to have a negative effect on dogs' heart functions,³ and some studies have even linked steroid use to liver, kidney and cartilage damage, gastrointestinal problems, and shock.⁴

According to the Merck Veterinary Manual, "[L]ongterm suppression of estrus by using androgens is not advised ... the safety and efficacy of injectable testosterone, as is practiced commonly in racing Greyhounds, has not been supported by controlled studies and is not advised."⁵

The use of anabolic steroids is a gambling integrity issue

Olympic heptathlon athlete Liudmyla Blonska is just one of the many human athletes that have been sanctioned for using methyltestosterone,⁶ the exact drug being used in Florida to suppress estrus in female dogs. Blonska was stripped of her silver medal in 2008 after she tested positive for methyltestosterone.⁷

According to Dr. Richard Sams of the University of Florida Racing Laboratory, anabolic steroids such as stanozolol would be "excellent" for enhancing greyhound race performance.⁸

Steroid restrictions are ignored by greyhound trainers

The Association of Racing Commissioners International lists testosterone and other anabolic steroids as Class 3 prohibited substances.⁹ Under the ARCI Model Rules, "[A]ny usage of anabolic steroids involving racing greyhounds is strictly prohibited at any stage of their training and racing careers."¹⁰ Nonetheless, industry participants have repeatedly avoided or ignored steroid restrictions:

- In April 2016, kennel owner George T. Fune was found in possession of non-prescribed methyltestosterone from a veterinarian not licensed by the Arizona Department of Gaming. He was suspended for fifteen days and fined \$500.¹¹
- In December 2013, an Alabama greyhound trainer was fined for possession of drug paraphernalia. One of the confiscated medications was testosterone.¹²

- 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."¹³
- In 2008, South Tucson voters passed a measure that, in part, prohibited the dosing of female greyhounds with anabolic steroids. To comply, the track veterinarian simply transported dogs into Tucson, a separately incorporated municipality, and continued the practice of administering anabolic steroids unabated.¹⁴

Despite the ARCI prohibition, the state of Florida specifically allows the use of testosterone in greyhounds under an obscure regulation that was adopted in 1996.¹⁵

Anabolic steroids are outlawed in racing dogs in other countries

Anabolic steroid use – and in many cases specifically testosterone – has come under fire in other countries. In 2007, the Irish Greyhound Board banned anabolic steroid use in male greyhounds, and later in 2014, it banned all anabolic steroid use in female greyhounds as well.¹⁶ Additionally, in a review of IGB's prohibited drugs policy, the Irish Greyhound Owners and Breeders Federation commented that "[t]hey considered anabolic steroid use completely unacceptable, abuse and a welfare issue."¹⁷ 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 Review 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."¹⁸ Currently, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain no longer includes testosterone on its "List of Permitted Treatments."¹⁹

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."²⁰ 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 \$6,000.²¹

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¹ Linda L. Blythe et al., *Care of the Racing and Retired Greyhound*, American Greyhound Council Inc., 2007, p166.

² Linda L. Blythe et al., *Care of the Racing and Retired Greyhound*, American Greyhound Council Inc., 2007, p167.

³ P. RÄMÖ, "Anabolic steroids alter the haemodynamic responses of the canine left ventricle," *Acta Physiologica Scandinavica*, 130(2) (1987): 209-217.

⁴ "Truth Behind the Benefits of Steroids in Dogs," *Pet Wave*, July 16, 2015.

⁵ Autumn P. Davidson, "Manipulation of the Estrous Cycle in Small Animals," *MerckVetManual.com*, [n.d.].

⁶ "IOC Sanctions Liudmyla Blonska for Failing Anti-Doping Test," *Olympic.org*, August 22, 2008.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Investigative Report No. 2009043310, *Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering*, February 26, 2010.

⁹ "Uniform Classification Guidelines for Foreign Substances and Recommended Penalties Model Rule," *Association of Racing Commissioners International, Inc.*, May 10, 2017.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Ruling Number 2016TGP009, *Arizona Department of Gaming – Racing Division*, 2016.

¹² Ruling No. AL16917, *Birmingham Racing Commission*, December 16, 2013.

¹³ Investigative Report No. 2013036828, *Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering*, November 21, 2013.

¹⁴ Darren DaRonco, "City bans dog steroid injections as way to thwart greyhound track," *Arizona Daily Star*, September 12, 2012.

¹⁵ Florida Administrative Code 61D-6.007 Permitted Medications for Racing Greyhounds, *Florida Department of State*, 1996.

¹⁶ "Oestrus Suppression in Racing Bitches," *Limerickandclaregoba.com*, June 17, 2014.

¹⁷ "Irish Greyhound Board Anti Doping and Medication Review," *Scientialis*, August 26, 2015.

¹⁸ "Report of Current GBGB Anti-doping and Medication Rules and their Implementation," *Independent Anti-Doping and Medication Control Review*, 2010, p24.

¹⁹ "A Trainer's Guide to Medication Control in Greyhounds," *Greyhound Board of Great Britain*, 2014.

²⁰ "Greyhounds Australasia Rules," *Greyhounds Australasia*, 2012.

²¹ "Rules and Policies: Categories of Prohibited Substances," *New Zealand Greyhound Racing Association*, 2014.