

Greyhound rescue groups take in dogs with broken legs

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TUCSON, AZ (Tucson News Now) - A local rescue group, Southern Arizona Greyhound Adoption is scrambling to raise funds to care for half a dozen Greyhounds they have rescued from a life of racing.

Vice President Gordon Bennett said they had taken in six Greyhounds in just the last three months, all with broken legs.

"We're seeing more than we have in the past," said Bennett.

There are seven greyhound adoption organizations in Arizona. Three organizations take in injured or ill dogs, GPA in Phoenix, AZ Greyhounds Inc. in Sierra Vista, and Southern Arizona Greyhound Adoption in Tucson. Volunteers said the vet bills were stacking up.

Bennett said the non-profit group had already shelled out \$30,000 since the first of the year.

"We're certainly low on funds. We don't want to get to the point where we have to turn the track or kennel operators down when they call in and say we have a dog with a broken leg," said Bennett.

Wink was one of the dogs in foster care. He had a broken leg and was being cared for by a family in Oro Valley. Bennett said since 2012 the organization had rescued 115 Greyhounds, all retired from racing at the track. While majority of them were healthy, they had many cases where dogs came in with injuries like broken legs, toes, sprains, and muscle tears.

The group was neutral to the controversial issue of racing Greyhounds, but the national advocacy group Grey2K USA was outraged to hear about the injured dogs.

President and General Counsel of the Massachusetts based organization Christine Dorchak criticized the Tucson race track, calling it one of the worst in the nation.

Dorchak said the organization would get detailed injury reports from the Arizona Racing Commission and from January, 2007 to November, 2009 there had been 1,000 injuries reported at the Tucson Greyhound Park.

Dorchak said the track stopped issuing injury reports for a while after that, but were forced to put out a list again when the law changed last year.

Greg Stiles, a public information officer with the Arizona Department of Racing declined to comment on specific cases at the park, but said the state had been issuing injury reports as required by the law.

Tucson News Now asked Stiles if we could have copies of injury reports from the Tucson Greyhound Park from January, 2014 till March, 2014 and were told we would have to obtain a freedom of information form and put in a request to get the information.

Officials with Grey2K USA said they had received several denials to the requests for reports they had put in, but they did have copies of injury reports from June, 2012 to December, 2012.

Dorchak said the reports were not as detailed as the ones they were getting five years ago. While it listed the names of the dogs and the injury they had sustained, the reports did not indicate how the dog had been treated, and the status of the injury.

Grey2K USA gave us copies of the reports from 2012. The reports indicated from June to December, 2013 about 62 greyhounds were reported to have suffered injuries at the Tucson Greyhound Park.

Dorchak explained the injuries could be anything from broken bones, to sprains, and strains.

"As long as Greyhound racing continues Greyhounds will suffer and they will die, just so someone can place a \$2 bet on them. That is not how you treat man's best friend," said Dorchak.

Tucson News Now stopped by the Greyhound Park to see if we could talk to the general manager. Dale Popp was available and spoke to us, but declined to go on camera.

Popp said the national advocacy group was feeding us lies, but declined to answer our questions. Popp said he had only taken over the race track about four months ago.

He added that dog safety was his number one priority, and mentioned that he canceled the dog races on Saturday, because he did not feel the track was ready for the dogs to run on.

Popp said every dog was inspected by a track vet and a state vet, and that dogs who were injured and under or over 1.5 lbs of the racing standard weight, were disqualified.

Dorchak said her group's mission was to change racing laws in Arizona, and eventually Grey2K USA hoped

to shut down the Tucson race track. She added that the organization had successfully led to the closure of 28 race tracks throughout the nation, and Tucson was her next target.

"We are going to keep working till dog racing ends here in Tucson, and that is my promise," said Dorchak.

Tucson News Now will stay on top of this story and file freedom of information requests with the State Department of Racing to obtain injury reports from the Tucson Greyhound Park.

To help Southern Arizona Greyhound adoption care for retired and injured Greyhounds you can visit their website at <http://sagreyhoundadoption.org/>.

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