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GREY2K USA

February 4, 2009

Professor Elizabeth Snyman-Van Deventer
Faculty of Law, University of the Free State
P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein
9300
South Africa

Dear Professor Snyman-Van Deventer,

I write this letter to urge against the authorization of commercial dog racing in South Africa. Good public policy argues against such action.

In the United States, greyhound racing is a dying industry that is inherently cruel to dogs. When first introduced to our country in the 1920's, it could not be foreseen that thousands and thousand of dogs would suffer and die. Records were not kept of track injuries or deaths, and the public could not know what really happened to racing dogs in the past.

Today, thanks to the enactment of Sunshine laws in various states, track records are now public documents. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a dog is injured every three to four days. Colorado reported 2,600 injuries from 1993-2007. In neighboring New Hampshire, newly-available records show that 1,200 injuries have occurred since January 2005. Reported injuries include broken bones, cardiac arrest, paralysis and seizures. The most frequent injuries are broken legs, but broken necks and crushed skulls are also reported each year. Some dogs die while racing, while others are put down because of the severity of their injuries, and/or because of their diminished value as racers.

When not racing, these gentle dogs are kept confined in warehouse-style kennels, inside small, stacked cages which are too small to allow free movement. Other than for brief turn-out periods, greyhounds live restricted for an average of twenty hours per day with little ability to interact with one another. The average greyhound stands thirty inches at the shoulder, but a standard cage size in the United States is just 32" wide by 41" deep by 34" high. To put it simply, this is no way to treat a dog.

The standard diet for dogs in the racing industry consists of rejected and diseased meat from downed animals. Deemed "4-D" by the federal government, this flesh may not be sold for human consumption; but it is purchased at very low cost by

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greyhound trainers and owners. Some argue that rotten meat spurs dogs to run faster, but the real reason for its use is the low cost. As revenues continue to plummet, it is essential that tracks and kennels keep overhead as low as possible. This reality suggests that veterinary care may also be subject to a cost-benefit analysis.

The decline of greyhound racing has been ongoing for years, and media outlets have long reported the spiraling collapse of this industry. Not only have humane concerns come to the forefront, but competition from other forms of gambling has forced tracks to close. Since 2004 alone, sixteen American tracks have shut down operations, and nine states have made greyhound gambling *per se* illegal. The trend is definitely with the greyhounds.

The best example I may offer is the most recent. In November 2008, GREY2K USA placed a question before Massachusetts voters asking for an end to dog racing in the state, and for the closure of its two dog tracks. The public was provided the tracks' own injury records and given access to racing footage. As a result, people came to understand that as long as dog racing continued, greyhounds would suffer. Moreover, there had been a 37% decline in revenue over the last three years at one track, and 65% at the other. In weighing out the waning benefits to the state against the cruelty that dogs suffer, the citizens of Massachusetts 'voted for the dogs' and outlawed greyhound gambling by a 56-44% margin statewide. Currently, the state of New Hampshire is now considering the same measure. You may see information about these campaigns at www.ProtectDogs.org and www.VoteForTheDogs.org.

As of 2009, dog racing remains legal and operational in just ten of our fifty United States. The Territory of Guam has just closed its track as well. After several years of financial losses, the owner abruptly shut the facility down and abandoned hundreds of dogs, resulting in a public health and humane dilemmas that have now been publicized world wide.

GREY2K USA is a national greyhound protection group which was formed for the explicit purpose of ending dog racing in the United States. It is our sincere hope that South Africa will not become another Guam. This would represent a step backwards in time, and result in both financial losses and harm to the humane traditions of your country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. A. Dorchak". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.
President, GREY2K USA
www.grey2kusa.org