

UNLUCKY 13



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BY CAROLINE COILE

“IF RACING GOES, WHAT WILL THEY SET THEIR SIGHTS ON NEXT? THE IDITAROD HAS LONG BEEN UNDER FIRE. WHAT ABOUT LURE-COURSING? FAST CAT? DOCK DIVING? RETRIEVING TRIALS? DOG SHOWS?”

Elephants, whales, and—racing greyhounds? Right now Amendment 13, a proposal to end greyhound racing, is on the ballot in Florida. Just as many of us feared, once Jumbo and Willie were freed (and by the way, now that the circus is out of business, who is paying to feed those elephants?), the free-the-animal groups aimed for the next animal involved in entertainment—the racing greyhound. Amendment 13 was initiated by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and Grey2KUSA (G2K). G2K is a lobbying group, not a retired racers adoption group, although many people assume they are, just as they assume HSUS is a shelter. Only 1.6% of G2K's annual \$600K income goes to greyhound adoption groups.

Why should you care? Because if racing goes, what will they set their sights on next? The Iditarod has long been under fire. What about lure-coursing? FAST CAT? Dock diving? Retrieving trials? Dog shows?

But as dog lovers, shouldn't we oppose greyhound racing? After all, don't they drastically overbreed and euthanize thousands of dogs every year, right? That's old news. These days breeding numbers have been cut dramatically, and adoption

numbers have risen to the point that demand nearly exceeds supply. In 2017 the National Greyhound Association (NGA) registered 7,000 puppies. This represents every puppy alive at 3 months of age. Records indicate that most of these puppies make it to the track with 80% of them winning a maiden race and embarking on racing careers. The other 20% may be retained for breeding or made available for adoption. Even puppies with obvious defects are placed for adoption at an early age. Every dog can be followed, and culling is not the norm.

According to Theresa Yon, from the Committee to Support Greyhounds, the adoption rate is between 95 to 98% of all available adoptees, “which doesn't account for those who are taken home after racing by their owners or trainers. In fact, many adoption groups are experiencing a shortage of dogs, even though they have adopters lined up ready to bring home their own ex-racer. At present, 77 retired racer adoption organizations are against Amendment 13, while only five are listed by the amendment supporters who wish to ban racing. The adopters like myself—who have no financial interest in the industry, and just love the breed—are standing up FOR racing not against it.”

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But HSUS, PETA and even the Doris Day Animal Foundation are against racing. The Animal Legal Defense Fund specifies 10 Talking Points against greyhound racing. I asked some pro-greyhound racers for their side of the story. Here's what I found out:

Claim #1: *Greyhound racing is oftentimes fatal. On average, a greyhound dies every three days on a Florida track. Of these dogs, 94% were three years old or younger.* **Response:** "More than half of the fatalities cited in Florida are not a direct result of racing, but are events of natural, premature mortality, or accidental death. There are upwards of 8,000 greyhounds racing in Florida at any given time, meaning about 1.5% passed away in a given year, with less than half of that 1.5 % not directly attributed to racing." I suspect if we looked at 8,000 show and competition dogs; heck if we looked at 8,000 'pet' dogs—we find a similar mortality rate. Dogs die. Accidents happen.

Claim #2: *Greyhounds are routinely drugged, and female dogs are regularly injected with anabolic steroids in order to keep them racing. More than 400 racing greyhounds tested positive for cocaine, novocaine, oxycodone, and lidocaine in the last ten years.* **Response:** "Female Greyhounds are given a shot in order to keep them from coming into season much like a woman would take birth control. Not only does it have no effect on racing or speed, it is completely temporary so that a female Greyhound can either have puppies or simply be "fixed" when she is finished racing." Remember Cheque drops? How many people used them to keep coat or simply for convenience? Several noted reproductive veterinarians advocate them for "saving the uterus" as each time a bitch cycles without being bred it predisposes her a bit more to pyometra. As for other drugs, data from the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation indicate that of 236,332 greyhound urine samples tested in 2016 only 18 tested positive for any drugs. Dare I say that's less than you'd find at a dog show with its Rescue Remedy and such abounding?

Claim 3#: *The life of a racing greyhound is marked by loneliness and boredom. Approximately 8,000 greyhounds are cruelly confined in a given year, spending 20 to 23 hours a day confined to double-stacked, warehouse-style metal cages that are barely large enough for them to stand up or turn around. Instead of blankets or bedding, dogs are only provided shredded paper or discarded carpet pieces.* **Response:** "Greyhounds actually have more human interaction than most house pets. There is no owner who leaves each day to go to work or run errands all day. They have trainers and kennel workers with them from about dawn until long after dinner. They are with people or kennelmates 24 hours a day – though the average racing Greyhound

will sleep for 16+ hours of that day. The average racer is often in a crate for only two to four hours of "awake time" each day. Turnouts for the hounds to play and socialize, exercise, racing practice, after race massages, or racing itself once or twice a week—these are the things that make up the day of the racing Greyhound. Oftentimes the kennel managers and workers spend more time with greyhounds than at home. They are truly dedicated to their dogs' health as racers and as future pets." This same argument can be used against dogs crated at or en route to shows—or to pet dogs while their owners are at work. Greyhound crates are as large or larger than those advocated by animal welfare groups for comparably sized dogs. And why are carpet squares worse than the carpet your dog lies on at home?

Claim #4: *"Serious injuries, including broken legs, paralysis, head trauma, and broken backs, are common in greyhound racing. Dogs have also been electrocuted after touching the track's high voltage lure. Some dogs actually die on the tracks, while others are euthanized behind closed doors."* **Response:** These same injuries occur in people's backyards, on hikes, or while lure-coursing. Greyhound tracks are engineered to be cushioning and banked to reduce injury. As for "euthanized behind closed doors"—are we now expected to make it a public event when we must euthanize any of our beloved dogs?

Claim #5: *Only two states, Florida included, do not publicly report on greyhound injuries. However, Seminole County began tracking greyhound injuries in May, 2017. Seminole County has reported 64 greyhound injuries since beginning that tracking.*

Response: "In a survey reported by veterinarians Bloomberg and Dugger (www.sportsvet.com) 761 injuries from 7,323 races run at 16 racetracks were reported from 1984 to 1990. Eight Greyhounds run in a race, so that's out of 378,584 racers for an injury ratio of 0.2% (two dogs per 1000 runs). This includes everything from a stubbed toe to a strained muscle – or a more serious injury. If a Greyhound is seriously injured, a track veterinarian is present to stabilize the injury."

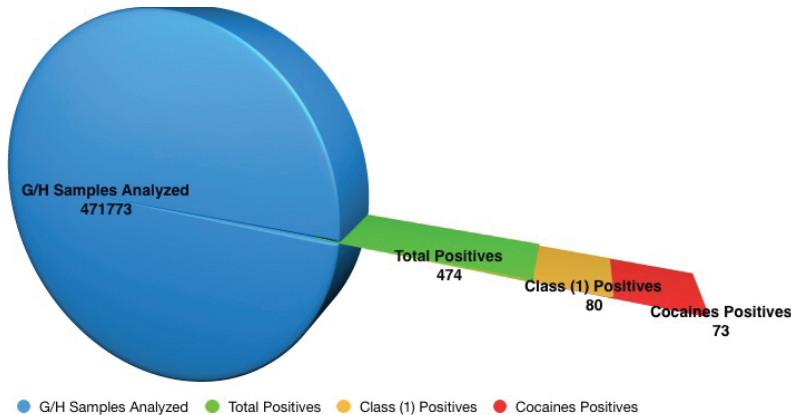
Claim #6: *Greyhound racing is a dying industry. Only 17 operational dog tracks remain in the United States. Eleven of these tracks are in Florida.* **Response:** Radical animal activists try to trick people by saying Greyhound racing is "illegal in 40 states." In fact, Greyhound Racing is illegal in only one state: Idaho. In other states, racing is legal but may not have active tracks, and in other states, dog racing is allowed but *commercial wagering* on those races is illegal. It might be argued that dog shows are on the decline. Certainly dog breeding is because of the difficulties now imposed. Could this one day be used against us as well?



"HANGING OUT IN THE CRATE"

GREYHOUND URINE SAMPLES - 2006-2017

	G/H Samples Analyzed	Total Positives	Class (1) Positives	Cocaines Positives
	471773	474	80	73



Class (1): Stimulant and depressant drugs that have the highest potential to affect performance and that have no generally accepted medical use in the racing animal. (Benzoylcegonine, Benzoylcegonine/Ecgonine Methyl Ester, Cocaine)

Source:

<http://www.myfloridalicense.com/DBPR/pari-mutuel-wagering/forms-and-publications/>

We won't go into the remaining claims, that the Amendment will reduce gambling by roughly \$200 million per year (no, it will just change it to casino style), that racing actually costs the state money (it pumps over \$200 million a year from wagering alone into the Florida economy, plus significant local employment and contributions), that it is the result of the racing industry's opposition to more stringent regulations (much as show breeders have fought against regulations that would make hobby breeding impossible), and that most Floridians do not support it (but racing supports up to 5,000 jobs associated with the dogs and tracks).

What will happen to the dogs? When Grey2K succeeded in banning racing in Massachusetts, where two tracks were operating, 800 direct jobs were lost, 131 greyhounds were retired, and about 1,000 more were sent to other tracks, forcing some of their dogs into quick retirement. With 11 tracks in Florida, and only six tracks elsewhere, the 8,000 dogs in Florida have no safety net when racing ends. The best dogs might be shipped out of the country where their treatment and fates are uncertain. Jennifer Newcome, a kennel manager who lost her livelihood when Massachusetts stopped racing, states: 'It was the worst day of my life. I cried in the snow as I watched the dogs I loved drive away then closing the door to the empty kennel for the last time...'

What will happen to the greyhound breed? Without racing there will be no retired racers—estimated to make up about 50,000 dogs—most sterilized—in this country. Perhaps grey-

hound pet lovers will turn to AKC greyhounds, but that small population could never meet demand. Perhaps NGA breeders will turn to breeding for the pet market directly, a new sort of high volume breeder. Otherwise, the racing greyhound may become extinct.

Amendment 13 will probably pass. It's a feel-good check of the box that sounds virtuous on the surface. After all, we've all heard about those instances where greyhounds have been neglected, right? The same could go for show dog breeders and handlers. The bad apples make the news. And they help dehumanize the rest of us. Remember the crusade against the carriage horses? The drivers were made to appear to be uncaring louts, whipping Black Beauty until he fell to the cobblestones. Dog people rallied to save the carriage horses; will we do less for the racing greyhounds? Will we do less for ourselves? Once Amendment 13 passes, what dog activity will be next in the AR's sights?

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RACING GREYHOUND

By Trainer Christopher Grieb

A 5 AM wake-up call starts the day. Though we like to think it's early, the dogs can hear the whirring of our car engines as we pull up to our kennel. Some are already rustling in their crates, stretching, shaking the evening's sleep out of their heads before we even open the doors to start the day. As we flip on the light switch, a deafening roar of barking meets our ears. A kennel full of dogs, awakened after a peaceful night's sleep, full of spunk and energy are ready to get their day started.

As we move from crate to crate, putting on each dog's kennel muzzle and letting them out to their turnout pens, the noise doesn't let up. Dogs ranging in age from 18 months to 5 years old are bursting with excitement. Jumping up on you, rubbing up against you, and sprinting back and forth from the pens to back inside their kennel, they are buzzing. Once we get them all outside, a sense of decorum returns; the dogs relieve themselves and begin socializing with one another. Hanging out with their kennelmates, they have a hierarchy they adhere to. There is very little if any confrontation during these turnouts.

The morning, or "First Turnout," is typically when the dogs are outside the longest during the day, depending on the weather. During first turnout, the trainer and his helper(s) give the kennel a thorough cleaning. Crates are swept out and beds

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are fluffed and straightened. If a crate is soiled, the bed is removed and the crate is mopped up with a bleach/water solution; a disinfectant is also in the solution to ensure the crate is as sanitary as possible. Once the crate dries, new, clean carpets are placed and the dog has a fresh bed again. This process is repeated for upwards of 70 dogs per kennel. Some tracks have more, some fewer. During the time the trainer and the helpers are doing this, the dogs are all outside. Being dogs. This first turnout can take upwards of 60-90 minutes. Every morning.

Once all the beds are done and the dogs are back in their crates, the work really begins. The trainer has a schedule set for every dog in his/her care. Some dogs are coming off a race from the previous day, so they need specific things done. Some dogs are racing that day, and need other specific things done. Some dogs are in between starts, and, again, will have something specific for them to do, too!

For the dog in between starts, it's typically a day to get the race-day kinks worked out; just like human athletes, greyhounds need to maintain their fitness. One of the best ways to do this is to take the racers "sprinting." After first turnout, the dogs who are scheduled to race two days forward are loaded up into the dog truck and taken to the sprint-path. The greyhounds are such creatures of habit who thrive on routine that they know what's in store for them. Upon arrival to the sprint path, the dogs are in full throat; excited to get out and run. They know within minutes it'll be their turn to get out and express what's the most natural thing for them to do - RUN! Typically, no more than three or four dogs are released into the sprint path, which is typically 10 yards wide by at least 100 yards long. Once the dogs are released it's a race to the other end, as hard and as fast as they can go! Then it's back down to their handlers... as hard and as fast as they can go! Then down and back again! AND down and back again, ONE MORE TIME! By this time, the dogs are panting heavily, their lungs are pumping, and their tongues and tails are wagging. It's at this moment, if you've never been around a racing greyhound, that you'll finally be able to understand what it is that makes the greyhound what s/he TRULY is.

Once every dog has been sprinted, it's time to go back to the kennel. Turned out into the turnout pens upon arrival, the dogs slake their thirst at the water buckets; like everyday pets, greyhounds always have access to fresh water. Given time to rest and catch their breath, the trainers are busy with the next

thing on their daily To-Do list. After each dog is brought back into their climate-controlled kennel (each kennel has AC that is typically set around 74-77 degrees—24/7/365) and placed back into their crates, it's time to weigh the dogs to ensure they're at their "set-weight," the weight at which they are scheduled to race. Trainers keep a detailed log of each racer's set-weight and how much they are fed daily. While each dog racing that day gets weighed in, the trainer goes over the dog meticulously, from the tip of his nose to the point of his tail, checking ears, eyes, teeth, toenails...any abnormalities are addressed. After that once-over, the dog is carefully checked for soundness. After all the dogs have been weighed in and

checked over, the trainer will mix the day's feed. After everyone has been fed, they're all turned out again. This is a more lazy, casual turnout. The dogs all have full bellies and are stress-free. Most of them aren't goofing around, but looking for a nice spot to lie down and relax. Again, the length of this turnout is dependent on the weather. If it's nice out, it'll last upwards of an hour. If it's too hot, too cold, or rainy, it'll be shortened appropriately.

If there's any soreness, liniments such as Absorbine Jr. or Trainers Choice (much like Flex-All 454 or Ben Gay) is massaged into the dog to treat it. Some kennels also use an ultra-sound machine to help work the kinks out. Once the dog has been "worked on," it's put back into its crate—usually with a cookie!—where it'll bed down and go to sleep. This is repeated for every dog that is racing until each one has had some individual attention.

After all of this has been done, it's time to give the dogs some quiet time.

All that work will usually take us up until around 10-10:30 AM and if anyone knows a greyhound, being up for five hours isn't really what they do well with! Most of them who aren't being worked or gone-over are already sleeping. But, when we finish up each morning, every single one of them will get comfortable and get back to sleep. And they'll remain asleep until their trainer returns to do an afternoon turnout mid-day, usually around 2 PM. They'll get another hour or so of turnout, and by then, they're chomping at the bit to get back into the kennel and their crates. Most of the dogs, will already be fast asleep before the last dog is put back to bed. They'll then be given another hour-long turnout in the evening around 7 or 8 PM.

This folks, is what a typical day for a racing greyhound is all about.



LIV AND HER TRAINER STEPHANIE