

Frequently Asked Questions: Live baiting in greyhound racing

What is live baiting?

Live baiting refers to the practice of using live animals for the purpose of training greyhounds. This practice is illegal in all states and territories in Australia. 'Bait' animals are tied to a mechanical lure and hurled at speed around the track while greyhounds are released to pursue and catch them. Live baiting may also involve pulling animals on leads/ropes and inciting dogs to catch them. The animals involved suffer horrific pain, fear, injury and distress and will eventually die. The same animals may be used repeatedly, suffering a very long and painful death.

What kinds of animals are being used in live baiting?

The RSPCA has received complaints relating to the use of live rabbits, possums and piglets to train racing greyhounds in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

Where was this alleged live baiting happening?

Based on reports of animal cruelty to state RSPCA Inspectorates, the live baiting allegedly occurred at training facilities in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. Each state has different animal cruelty legislation and each complaint will be investigated by the respective RSPCA Inspectorate teams and respective authorities.

Is this happening at other locations in Australia?

At this stage, the RSPCA has only been provided with evidence relating to New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. The RSPCA welcomes anyone with information that may support this or future investigations regarding greyhound welfare to contact their state or territory RSPCA. Information can be supplied anonymously: rspca.org.au/report-cruelty

Is live baiting illegal?

The use of live animals for baiting in greyhound racing is illegal in all Australian states and territories. [For more information please see here.](#)

Was the RSPCA made aware of this alleged cruelty involving live baiting?

RSPCA Inspectorates in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria have received complaints reporting live baiting and are currently investigating.

Are you prosecuting these trainers? What is the process?

All reported cruelty complaints are taken very seriously by RSPCA Inspectorates. The complaints received regarding live baiting are being formally investigated by the Inspectorates in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. Further details of these investigations cannot be shared at this time but all possible actions, including prosecution, are under consideration.

What are the maximum penalties for these offences?

Prosecution for the use of live animals as bait or a lure for the purpose of training dogs under state Prevention of Cruelty to Animals legislation carries the following penalties:

- New South Wales: maximum penalty in the case of an individual of \$22,000 or imprisonment for 2 years (or both), and \$110,000 in the case of a corporation.
- Queensland: maximum penalty in the case of an individual is \$33,000 or 1 year's imprisonment.
- Victoria: potential charges of more than \$35,000 or imprisonment for 2 years or, in the case of a body corporate, more than \$177,000.

Where possible, the RSPCA would also be seeking a lifetime ban on animal ownership and revocation of training licences be applied if this matter is brought before the courts. Offenders may also face disqualification from the greyhound industry under Greyhound Authority rules.

Why are the trainers using live baiting? Is there any proof that this makes a difference?

Trainers are undertaking this illegal activity because they believe that it will give their greyhound a competitive edge, encouraging their dogs to run faster. There is no documented evidence that this will make a difference, but in any case live baiting is an intensely cruel means of cheating that is illegal across all Australian states and territories.

I'm concerned that my greyhound may have been trained using live baiting and may become aggressive. What can I do?

If you are concerned about your pet greyhound, we recommend contacting a reputable animal behaviourist or your local RSPCA for advice and support.

If you are concerned about your racing greyhound, we recommend contacting your state Greyhound Racing body to discuss your concerns.

Frequently Asked Questions - Greyhound racing

Why are greyhounds used in racing?

Greyhounds are sight hounds that can run up to 60km per hour, making them one of the fastest animals in the world. Unfortunately, this innate ability to run at high speed has resulted in many thousands of greyhounds being bred and trained for racing each year in Australia alone.

In many countries around the world, greyhound racing is an amateur sport but in Australia, it is a part of a major gambling industry worth tens of millions of dollars every year.

Greyhound racing is quickly becoming a socially unacceptable form of entertainment. In the USA alone, it is illegal in 39 states.

Is the RSPCA opposed to greyhound racing?

RSPCA Australia considers that there are significant animal welfare problems inherent in and associated with the greyhound racing industry. These include:

1. Illegal use of live animals to train racing greyhounds

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2. Significant overbreeding and oversupply of greyhounds

Thousands of greyhounds are born in Australia each year that are surplus to Industry requirements. Industry statistics show that up to around 40% of greyhounds born (7000 greyhounds every year) will never receive a registered racing 'name' and hence never race. This problem is exacerbated by financial incentives for breeding, appearance fees as well as the lure of prize money. Ongoing 'wastage' continues over time as active racing greyhounds retire from racing or are discarded due to injury or sub-optimal performance, among other reasons.

The racing career for a greyhound is relatively very short. Dogs who begin a racing career usually start racing at about one-and-a-half years of age and are generally retired by two to five years of age, or earlier if they develop injuries or do not perform well.

Many of these unwanted greyhounds will be euthanased despite being otherwise healthy and rehoming. Statistics on the fate of unwanted greyhounds are not published by industry, but based on the available information it is clear that the euthanasia rate is unacceptable high, with a conservative estimate of 9,000 adult greyhounds put down every year.

While greyhound adoption programs are a step forward, they cannot cope with the high numbers of greyhounds (thousands each year) moving through the system. Only a very small

proportion of ex-racing greyhounds (around 1000) are adopted annually in Australia through industry greyhound adoption programs.

3. High rate of injuries suffered by racing greyhounds

Injuries are common in greyhound racing and are a major cause of wastage. Injuries are a major animal welfare issue as they cause pain, suffering and distress to the affected animals. Various types of injuries are regularly reported including serious bone fractures and muscle injuries: the first turn of the racetrack is a common site for accidents or collisions to occur. Serious injuries can lead to death on the track or require immediate euthanasia. Injury statistics are not published for all tracks, but based on industry figures we estimate that more than 600 greyhounds may be injured every month on greyhound tracks during races across Australia. Additional injuries will occur during training.

4. Inadequate socialisation and inadequate environmental enrichment

Many greyhound puppies and adult greyhounds are never adequately socialised, either with other dogs or with humans. Dogs that are socially deprived are more likely to develop fearfulness and antisocial behaviour which impacts negatively on their welfare. Lack of adequate socialisation also makes it more difficult to rehome retired or unwanted greyhounds.

5. Administration of banned substances

Various pharmaceutical substances have been administered to racing greyhounds in the quest for enhanced performance and increased potential to win races. Racing authorities maintain a list of banned substances and run drug testing programs, however drug use still occurs. Administration of banned substances is a serious animal welfare issue as many of these drugs can have serious physical and psychological effects on greyhounds. Dogs have tested positive to a range of substances including amphetamines, caffeine, anabolic steroids, Viagra, and cocaine.

6. Lack of industry transparency and accountability

Currently there is a major lack of published data on the life cycle and outcome for racing greyhounds. This lack of transparency has major ramifications in terms of tracking animal welfare outcomes in the industry. Missing figures include: the exact number of greyhounds born each year; the number of greyhounds 'named' as a proportion of the greyhounds born; rates of euthanasia and the number of racing greyhounds exported.

7. Inadequate regulation or enforceable standards

The Greyhound Racing industry is overseen by each state and territory's Greyhound Racing Authority who is responsible for both the regulation of the industry and its commercial development, promotion and marketing. Animal welfare standards in the industry are minimal and in many cases unenforceable. This self-regulatory model fails to ensure that the welfare of greyhounds is prioritised and can lead to serious conflicts of interest, such as the use of financial incentives to promote greyhound breeding which in turn drive up wastage rates.

8. Export of greyhounds

Australian greyhounds are sold and exported overseas for racing purposes. Greyhounds have been exported to a range of countries including China and Vietnam. Exporting places them at significant risk of poor animal welfare outcomes including stress and injuries associated with long-distance transport, lack of animal welfare legal protection in importing countries, and the potential to enter the dog meat trade. In 2014, Greyhounds

Australasia introduced voluntary suspensions of greyhound passports to certain destinations due to animal welfare concerns.

Who oversees the greyhound racing industry in Australia?

The Greyhound Racing industry is overseen by each state and territory's Greyhound Racing authority. Each state and territory's Minister for Racing oversees the organisations and has the power to increase regulation, which the RSPCA suggests is desperately needed.

What is the RSPCA's view on the self-regulation of the greyhound racing industry?

The RSPCA's view is that the current regulatory framework where Greyhound Racing Authorities self-regulate their industry presents a conflict of interest. It is inappropriate for a controlling body to simultaneously promote and expand an industry whilst also being responsible for integrity and regulatory matters.

In order to address this issue, a formal separation needs to occur between the commercial management functions of greyhound authorities, such as the promotion of the industry, and other regulatory and integrity functions such as participant disciplinary action, stewards management and greyhound welfare.

What happens to greyhounds when they can no longer race or are deemed too slow/unsuitable for racing?

Similar to many other companion dogs, greyhounds may live up to 13 years but the vast majority of racing greyhounds do not see this age or have the opportunity to live in a loving home. When deemed unsuitable for racing, many greyhounds are faced with euthanasia at the request of their trainer.

Is greyhound racing banned anywhere in the world?

Greyhound racing is illegal in 39 states of the USA, including most recently a ban in Colorado.

Is it true that Australian greyhounds are exported overseas?

Yes. Australian greyhounds are currently exported for racing purposes. Most are exported from QLD and NSW and are sent to destinations such as China, and Macau. In 2010, a total of 797 greyhounds were exported.

There are a number of serious animal welfare concerns associated with export. Transport is inherently stressful for animals and therefore transport should only be undertaken where absolutely necessary. There are injury and stress risks throughout the transport process which increase as the journey length increases. In addition, animal protection laws may not exist in the destination countries (or if laws do exist they may not be enforced). There are also serious concerns about the apparent lack of formal re-homing programs in the destination countries.

What else has the RSPCA done in relation to this issue?

The RSPCA works to tirelessly fight animal cruelty and has been working to improve the welfare of greyhounds behind-the-scenes by influencing government and other organisations. We have made a number of submissions to governments calling for strengthening of regulation, enforcement, offences and penalties to help protect greyhounds from cruelty and prevent practices such as live baiting from occurring. The RSPCA has also worked hard to raise the profile of greyhounds as pets to improve rehoming rates for ex-racing greyhounds.

Is racing itself dangerous for Greyhounds?

Greyhounds love to run but sadly, competitive racing leads to serious injury and sometimes death. Various types of injuries are regularly reported including serious bone fractures and muscle injuries: the first turn of the racetrack is a common site for accidents or collisions to occur. Serious injuries can lead to death on the track or require immediate euthanasia. Injury statistics are not published for all tracks, but based on industry figures we estimate that more than 600 greyhounds may be injured every month on greyhound tracks during races across Australia. Additional injuries will occur during training.

Are all greyhounds at risk of hurting small animals?

Most greyhounds are no more likely than any other dog to harm other animals. Many greyhounds live in harmony with cats and small animals. Like any companion animal, it's important that greyhounds are temperament tested for their suitability to live with other animals before putting them in this situation.