



10<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

## **Greyhound Welfare**

Greyhound Racing has for a long time been one of the highest attended spectator sports in the UK. It is governed and regulated by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) which is the only sporting regulatory body to have achieved and maintained accreditation from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS - see below). Coupled with recent legislative measures, greyhound racing in Britain benefits from the highest level of regulation compared with other sports.

There are currently 25 racecourses in Britain licensed by the GBGB.

The GBGB operates a system of licensing which ensures that all racecourse officials, trainers and kennelhands are subject to the Rules of Racing. Both racecourses and licensed residential kennels are regularly inspected by a team of stipendiary stewards who have the power to issue improvement notices to ensure the rules are being upheld.

All greyhounds are compulsorily microchipped at the point of registration with the GBGB, a process in which the GBGB is unique, and detailed identification markings and records are kept by the Registry department to ensure the correct identification of each greyhound during and following their racing career. Furthermore, a detailed database is maintained by the industry that records all relevant information to protect the welfare of each greyhound registered by the GBGB.

The industry spends a significant sum each year from its annual budget directly on greyhound welfare and welfare related projects, (it being the highest area of expenditure for the entire industry's budget), in order to maintain the high levels of welfare that exist in licensed greyhound racing. The introduction in April 2010 of the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations, under the Animal Welfare Act, ensured greyhounds are the most protected of all canine breeds. In addition to regular and unannounced stipendiary steward inspections, it is mandatory for each licensed kennel to pass an annual and independent veterinary inspection before that kennel is re-issued with a training licence.

A veterinary surgeon is in attendance at each and every race meeting or trial session held at a licensed racecourse, with each greyhound being examined twice before racing, once at kennelling and again immediately before its race - as well as being checked by the vet in attendance following its race.

The number of greyhounds registered each year to race at licensed racecourses is just under 8,000, which is matched by a similar amount retiring from the sport each year. The Retired Greyhound Trust, has 74 branches nationwide and alone find homes for more than 4,000 greyhounds annually; while a vast number of registered greyhounds are retained as pets by their owners and trainers, as well as being homed by other re-homing organisations.

Anti-greyhound racing organisations will make many sensational claims and accusations regarding the racing of greyhounds in Great Britain. These range from claims of extreme cruelty to an often used statistic that up to 15,000 greyhounds are put to sleep each year. These claims and figures are a complete nonsense and are used by such groups as an emotive tool to sensationalise their propaganda.

All registered owners are bound by Rule 18 of the GBGB's Rules of Racing, available at <http://www.thedogs.co.uk/RulesofRacing.aspx>, which is explicit in detailing the acceptable options available to owners of retired greyhounds. The requirements of this rule are vigorously enforced by GBGB and each owner of a registered greyhound must supply detailed information to the GBGB Welfare Department when their greyhound has not raced for a period of six months. Incomplete or irregular information provided will be investigated by the Welfare and Integrity Department, and any breach of this rule will be subject to disciplinary action.

The GBGB meets regularly with responsible animal welfare charities such including the Dogs Trust and RSPCA at the Greyhound Forum, to discuss and help formulate appropriate welfare policies for licensed greyhound racing.

Those with an interest in greyhounds and greyhound racing want to see a thriving industry where the welfare of the dogs is paramount. Racecourse investment, in addition to providing great racing for the public to attend and enjoy, is firmly focused on maintaining and improving welfare standards. As noted above, a significant part of the industry's budget is spent on welfare and welfare related projects such as investment in on-course veterinary facilities, veterinary training, track surface and geometry research and a continual programme of track care and maintenance. In addition, a significant amount is spent each year from this budget on re-homing activities for the greyhounds that retire from their tracks through support and funding of re-homing centres nationwide.

### **UKAS Accreditation**

In March 2010, GBGB announced that greyhound racing had become the first sport to achieve UKAS accreditation, thereby securing its role as the regulator of licensed racecourses. The attainment of UKAS accreditation was a recommendation by Lord Donoughue in his 2007 Independent Review of the Greyhound Industry in Great Britain.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is the sole national accreditation body recognised by government, and its inspectors have carried out assessments during the past three years against internationally recognised standards to test GBGB's licensing and inspecting processes for consistency, reliability and non-discrimination against standard EN45011.

**Further information can be requested by contacting the GBGB press office on 020 7421 3775, [james.mccreadie@gbgb.org.uk](mailto:james.mccreadie@gbgb.org.uk)**