

GREYHOUND FORUM

Friday 17th November 2023, 9:30am by Zoom

MEETING SUMMARY

In attendance: Battersea Dogs & Cats Home; DEFRA; Greyhound Board of Great Britain; Greyhounds in Need; Greyhound Trust; Racecourse Promoters Association; The Kennel Club

- DEFRA remained open to receiving suggestions for how the 2010 Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations might be improved. However, DEFRA cautioned that an active review is neither underway nor planned in the near term.
- The Forum's updated Terms of Reference had been published on the website following review at the last meeting.
- The Chair had written on behalf of the Forum to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport in July regarding the inadequate level of bookmaker funding to deliver welfare standards and improvements. A reply received in August had been circulated. It offered no new assurances on funding mechanisms but did reaffirm the Secretary of State's expectation that welfare would remain at the heart of the sport.
- GBGB reported little change to the funding situation since the last meeting. Discussions with the betting industry continued. Based on current income, all of the short-term objectives within the Welfare Strategy could be funded, along with some of the medium-term goals. However, without additional funding, it would not be possible for the Strategy to be implemented in full. Forum members expressed their serious concern at the funding shortfall and GBGB recognised the implications of the Welfare Strategy not being implemented fully and within a reasonable timeframe. GBGB was itself cutting costs where possible to reallocate funds to welfare.
- GBGB provided an update on progress to implement the Welfare Strategy:
 - A review of standards required of kennels at tracks was underway and suggestions from welfare members were encouraged.
 - By the end of 2023 STRI will have completed 42 track inspections, double the number completed in 2022.
 - GBGB has created a new Track Maintenance Guide, and new guidance for owners which highlights their responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act.
 - GBGB-commissioned research is underway including in relation to Greyhound nutrition, identifying the causes for and early detection of injury, reasons for euthanasia at tracks and improved traceability of dogs.
 - 473 residential kennels have been inspected by independent auditors in 2023, leading to 155 improvement notices being issued with all but two being fully implemented.
 - The new team of Regional Regulatory Vets have between January and November carried out 160 extra visits to trainers to support Greyhound welfare.
 - GBGB has published new policies on hot weather and fireworks. It was noted that tracks did not race over the weekend of 5th November, representing a notable and welcome change from years' past when welfare members of the Forum were very concerned that the impact of fireworks on Greyhound welfare had not been fully recognised by all in the industry.
- Rehoming was a key area of discussion at the meeting, with the Forum noting a general slowdown in dog rehoming as evidenced by many welfare organisations and driven by factors such as the Cost-of-Living crisis.
- On the back of reduced rehoming, the number of retired Greyhounds in trainers' kennels awaiting rehoming was increasing. Combined with a slowdown in Greyhound breeding, many races involved fewer than the usual six Greyhounds.
- Welfare members reported seeing more dogs with complex needs, and an increase in requests from adopters to return Greyhounds. Reasons for returned Greyhounds included financial

pressures and behavioural difficulties such as chase drive, separation anxiety and resource guarding.

- The Forum considered what could be done to increase the demand for Greyhounds as pets amongst those seeking to acquire a dog. This included the potential for development of brand—neutral marketing assets that could be used by rehoming organisations.
- It was identified that socialisation of Greyhounds was important to prepare them for life in a domestic home. As part of the Welfare Strategy, GBGB was developing guidance including on the importance of socialisation in early life.
- Forum members agreed to continue to work collaboratively to identify and support initiatives to increase the responsible rehoming of Greyhounds. Discussions on this subject would continue at the next meeting of the Forum, in January 2024.
- Mindful of the large numbers of racing Greyhounds imported from the Republic of Ireland, the Forum noted the introduction of Government's new Border Target Operating Model from January 2024, that would require physical checks on all live animals imported to Great Britain.