

# GREYHOUND FORUM

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024, 2pm by Zoom

## MEETING SUMMARY

**In attendance:** Battersea Dogs & Cats Home; DEFRA; Greyhound Board of Great Britain; Greyhound Trust; Racecourse Promoters Association; The Royal Kennel Club.

**Apologies received from:** Greyhounds in Need

- GBGB is reviewing standards for racecourse kennels, and feedback from Forum members was encouraged.
- GBGB provided an update on the progress of the Welfare Strategy:
  - GBGB's process to inspect and licence trainers' kennels in conjunction with independent auditors from SCI has received UKAS accreditation. It was noted that the process to inspect and licence racecourses had been accredited by UKAS for some years. The Forum welcomed this news as a notable advance that provided increased confidence in the rigour and consistency of the inspection regime.
  - A new [Track Maintenance Guide](#) had been published in early January 2024, with the aim of helping stadia to deliver best practice in preparing racing surfaces.
  - The number of independent inspections of track surfaces by STRI is increasing to 4 per year of each stadia in 2024.
  - Genetics research is underway, with the aim of helping breeders to produce dogs that are more resilient and healthier.
  - Further research projects underway include identifying causes of injuries; how modern technology could be used to enable early detection of subclinical injuries; nutrition for racing Greyhounds; and the potential to use nose printing as a form of Greyhound identification to replace earmarking.
  - GBGB continues to roll out new CPD for trainers, veterinarians, track staff, breeders and those involved in rehoming. Both in person practical sessions and webinars are being scheduled and recent training topics have included nutrition, good breeding and preventing osteoarthritis.
  - In December 2023 GBGB introduced a new welcome pack for owners of racing Greyhounds, providing them with background information, including setting out their welfare and legal responsibilities.
  - Work on a welcome pack for new owners of retired Greyhounds is ongoing in conjunction with the Greyhound Trust. Input from other Forum members was welcome.
  - A standardised behaviour assessment is in development to help prepare Greyhounds for rehoming.
- As the short-term objects of the Strategy have been largely delivered, GBGB is now looking to the medium-term objectives. These include a strong focus on driving rehoming and on traceability and international movement of Greyhounds.
- There had been no change to the funding arrangements with the voluntary levy remaining at 0.6% of betting turnover. GBGB is continuing discussions with betting operators to increase funding to 1%. This would provide approximately an extra £3 million a year to enable the long-term objectives within the Welfare Strategy to be delivered. Forum members reaffirmed their concerns that there remained no progress on funding and suggested that a statutory mechanism was now likely to be essential to deliver the funding required to improve and maintain acceptable levels of welfare.

- The Forum noted the recent closure of Henlow Stadium and was pleased that GBGB reported there to be no welfare implications with Greyhounds racing instead at alternative local tracks.
- Members expressed concern that the launch of two, competing broadcast services by PGR and SIS could lead to an increase in racing and hence more Greyhounds entering and retiring and requiring rehoming. GBGB added that the current schedules suggested a slight contraction in the overall number of race meetings and many races continued to involve fewer than six Greyhounds. There had been an estimated 65% fall in the number of Greyhounds bred in the UK and Ireland in the last 20 years.
- Members expressed concern at reports that two GBGB-registered Greyhounds had allegedly been exported to China. GBGB confirmed that both cases were under investigation. DEFRA advised that there is no statutory mechanism to prevent export. The Forum considered the export of Greyhounds to countries where welfare standards could not be verified to be a serious concern and urged the industry in both the UK and Republic of Ireland to adopt the toughest possible stance.
- Rehoming of retired Greyhounds remained a concern although some members reported a slight improvement in rehoming rates since the last meeting. As discussed at the previous meeting, rehoming was being impacted by the long-term impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and more recently by the Cost-of-Living crisis.
- GBGB was developing proposals for a marketing campaign to promote Greyhounds as pets. Input from Forum members was encouraged. The GBGB Welfare Strategy was also reviewing opportunities to promote the breed and to support rehoming organisations. It was agreed that this subject should remain a key area of discussion at future meetings.
- It was agreed that the next meeting will take place in late May or early June.