



Cynulliad National  
Cenedlaethol Assembly for  
Cymru Wales

**All Party Group for Animal Welfare**

*An All Party Group for Members of the National Assembly for Wales formed to promote and further the cause of animal welfare, by all means available, in Wales.*

## **APGAW Wales Evidence to the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW Westminster) on the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds.**

### **1) THIS SUBMISSION**

The working group has been established to enquire into the welfare of racing greyhounds in England. This statement is focused on evidence gathered by members of the Wales Greyhound Forum but this is also relevant to England.

Section two establishes the sources of this evidence and section three sets out a conceptual framework identifying the nine possible fates of retired greyhounds.

Sections four and five summarise evidence gathered by research and enquiries carried out to date in Wales.

Section six sets out plans for further research in Wales and suggests that a similar exercise would be both easily achievable and very useful in England.

## **2) SOURCES OF THE EVIDENCE**

This submission is based upon evidence from three different sources.

### **a) SURVEY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY POUNDS:**

The All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) at the National Assembly for Wales carried out research in association with Greyhound Rescue Wales to identify the numbers of greyhounds entering local authority pounds in Wales. (The fate of racing greyhounds and working lurchers in Wales, APGAW 2003).

The survey also established a simple conceptual framework that lists all the possible “fates” of racing greyhounds once they retire.

### **b) INTERVIEWS WITH INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN GREYHOUND RACING IN WALES.**

In May 2004 a black greyhound called “Last Hope”, was found shot through the head with a captive bolt gun and with its ears cut off in south Wales. The greyhound was subsequently identified, and his owner and trainer were traced and the person who shot him was found and successfully prosecuted by the RSPCA. The identification of the people involved was possible because individuals involved in greyhound racing in south Wales co-operated with the police, members of the registered charity Greyhound Rescue Wales, and the RSPCA Inspector each of whom made their own enquiries. The discussions between members of Greyhound Rescue Wales and people involved in the racing industry who provided information were written-up shortly afterwards as a discussion paper (Greyhound being killed by their owners in south Wales – key points, Alain Thomas 15.07.04). The information subsequently appeared in the Greyhound Rescue Wales Newsletter (100 greyhounds are shot in Wales each year, Greyhound Express the newsletter of Greyhound Rescue Wales, Autumn 2004).

### **c) DISCUSSION AT THE WALES GREYHOUND FORUM:**

The Wales Greyhound Forum was established in early 2004. It brings together representatives of the three Welsh Greyhound tracks (Bedwellte, Swansea, and Valleys-Ystrad Mynach) and of three welfare organisations (Dogs Trust, Greyhound Rescue Wales and RSPCA). The Forum is chaired by Lorraine Barrett A.M. Forum members aim to work together to promote the welfare of greyhounds in Wales. Following the death of the greyhound “Last Hope”, the forum discussed the issue of greyhounds being shot by captive bolt guns and the likely scale of the problem.

### 3) A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The survey of greyhounds entering local authority pounds in Wales (APGAW 2003) listed nine possible fates of retired greyhounds and divided them into “acceptable fates” and “unacceptable fates”.

**Fig’ 1: The nine “fates” of racing greyhounds....**

<b>Unacceptable</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Abandoned and taken to local authority pound.</li> <li>2. Abandoned and die without being found.</li> <li>3. Euthanased by Vet’.</li> <li>4. Killed by .... Owner.</li> <li>5. Abandoned then found and kept by member of the public.</li> <li>6. Abandoned, then taken in and re-homed directly by rescue organisation.</li> </ol>
<b>Acceptable</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Kept by .... owner as pet.</li> <li>8. Handed to rescue organisation by ....owner, then re-homed successfully by rescue.</li> <li>9. Re-homed successfully to a good home by .... owner.</li> </ol>

The sources listed in section 2) above provide evidence about two of the nine fates

1. Abandoned and taken to local authority pound, and;

4. Killed by .... Owner.

This information has been previously submitted to DEFRA by members of the Wales Greyhound Forum in the course of consultations about the Animal Welfare Bill. However the following sections 4 and 5 summarise this information for convenience.

#### **4) GREYHOUNDS ABANDONED AND ENTERING LOCAL AUTHORITY POUNDS.**

**EVIDENCE:** The research took the form of a near complete survey of local authority pounds in Wales (19 out of the 22 local authorities responded). The survey found that 139 greyhounds entered local authority pounds in Wales during a 12 month period. Various safeguards were built into the survey to cross-check the findings and to differentiate between true greyhounds and near cross-breeds.

**INTERPRETATION:** The near complete survey is a robust piece of research, and the figure of 139 abandoned greyhounds in Wales therefore constitutes hard evidence.

The survey report extrapolates the Welsh figure to Britain as a whole on the basis of population (Wales has approximately 5% of the population of Britain) and suggests that about 2800 greyhounds are therefore likely to enter all British pounds in a 12 month period. The extrapolation is obviously less robust. However there is no evidence of any kind to suggest that the situation in England and Scotland is any different to that in Wales. In the absence of any such evidence it is reasonable to treat the extrapolated figure as a guideline that suggests very generally the number of greyhounds in Britain as a whole that are abandoned and taken into local authority pounds once their racing career is over.

#### **5) GREYHOUNDS BEING KILLED BY THEIR OWNERS IN WALES**

##### **EVIDENCE:**

Interviews with owners of racing greyhounds in Wales following the death of the greyhound “Last Hope” found that:

- Between 100 and 300 greyhounds were being shot in South Wales each year.
- A small number of people were responsible for shooting the dogs.
- The shooting was taking place in a systematic and organised way.
- A large number of people used the services of the dog-killers because they charged only £15 to £20 to shoot a dog and dispose of the body which was substantially cheaper than the cost of euthanasia by a veterinary surgeon.

- Once people had used the services of the dog killers it would be difficult for them to speak out against the practice.
- Greyhounds retiring from registered tracks were frequently sold to people who race greyhounds at independent tracks in south Wales. Buyers would not be asked to prove their identity. This provided the registered sector with a means of disposing of unwanted greyhounds. The buyers would benefit from placing bets at relatively high odds on the new, unknown dogs.

Discussions at the Wales Greyhound Forum supported these findings. A representative of the racing industry attending a meeting of the Wales Greyhound Forum argued that the practice of shooting greyhounds with a captive bolt gun was more humane than taking it to a veterinary surgeon as long as the person using the bolt gun was skilled and experienced in its use. They also said that this was common practice because it was cheaper than euthanasia by a veterinary surgeon. The issue was discussed further by a working party of the Forum. The working party (June 8th, 2005), that involved five representatives of greyhound racing and three welfare representatives affirmed that the practice was not an “acceptable fate” for a greyhound. The working party agreed that it was difficult to arrive at an exact figure for the number of greyhounds being shot by their owners. The working party agreed that even one greyhound being shot each year would be one too many and agreed on a working figure of 100 greyhounds being shot in Wales each year. This figure could then be used as target for the number of additional homes that would be needed each year in Wales in order to provide an alternative to owners who currently arranged for their greyhounds to be shot.

### **INTERPRETATION:**

The evidence is qualitative in nature and comes from interviews and discussions. However a strength of the evidence is that is drawn from sources within greyhound racing who had no motive to exaggerate the numbers of greyhounds being shot. It is further strengthened by the process of “validation through consultation” that took place as a result of the later discussions at the Wales Greyhound Forum. It is also interesting that the conclusions which were first published in July 2004 are broadly in line with the findings of the Sunday Times article of July 16th 2006 in that both uncovered the large scale and systematic slaughter of greyhounds, performed as a kind of “service” for owners of racing greyhounds. This corroboration adds further weight to the evidence. It is therefore highly likely that similar services are being performed in other parts of Britain.

## **6) THE CASE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

There is a lack of hard evidence concerning the fate of retired greyhounds. Therefore, further research is now planned in Wales to achieve greater clarity as to the numbers of greyhounds meeting some of the other fates. Some of the research will be carried out by the National Assembly for Wales and other elements will be conducted by the Wales Greyhound Forum in association with APGAW (Wales). It is intended that the research will be carried out during 2006 and 2007 prior to the implementation of the Animal Welfare Bill in Wales.

Specifically:

- The National Assembly for Wales will repeat the 2003 survey of greyhounds entering local authority pounds in Wales (Fate 1).
- The Wales Greyhound Forum has conducted a survey of all veterinary practices in Wales and returns are currently being received (fate 3).
- The Wales Greyhound Forum will conduct a survey of all major rescue organisations that re-home greyhounds from Wales (fates 6 and 8).
- The Wales Greyhound Forum will monitor selected newspapers where greyhound owners are known to advertise unwanted greyhounds available for sale for a small price or “free to a good home” (fate 9).
- The Wales Greyhound Form will contact owners of pet greyhounds and other interested parties to gather anecdotal evidence and case studies in order to gain an idea of the circumstances and numbers of greyhounds being abandoned and dying (for example in road traffic accidents) and being abandoned then found and kept as a pet by a member of the public (fates 2 and 4).

This research is summarised in figure two on the next page.

**Fig' 2: Further research planned to assess the numbers of greyhounds meeting each fate.**

<b>The nine fates of retired greyhounds</b>	<b>Research planned to assess numbers</b>
<b>Unacceptable</b>	
<p>1. Abandoned and taken to local authority pound.</p> <p>2. Abandoned and die without being found.</p> <p>3. Euthanased by Vet'.</p> <p>4. Killed by .... Owner.</p> <p>5. Abandoned then found by member of the public.</p> <p>6. Abandoned, then taken in and re-homed directly by rescue organisation.</p>	<p>Repeat of 2003 survey of local authority pounds by National Assembly for Wales (planned 2006-07).</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence and case studies gathered by members of Wales Greyhound Forum (Planned 2006-07).</p> <p>Survey of Veterinary Practices in Wales by Wales Greyhound Forum (Underway Autumn 2006).</p> <p>Interviews with owners of racing greyhounds and discussions with representatives of greyhound racing in Wales (carried out in 2004-2005). and discussions at Wales.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence and case studies gathered by members of Wales Greyhound Forum (Planned 2006-07).</p> <p>Survey of rescue organisations that re-home greyhounds from Wales by Wales Greyhound Forum (planned 2006-07).</p>
<b>Acceptable</b>	
<p>7. Kept by .... Owner as pet.</p> <p>8. Handed to rescue organisation by ....owner, then re-homed successfully by rescue.</p> <p>9. Re-homed successfully to a good home by .... Owner.</p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence and case studies gathered by members of Wales Greyhound Forum (Planned 2006-07).</p> <p>Survey of rescue organisations that re-home greyhounds from Wales by Wales Greyhound Forum (planned 2006-07)</p> <p>Monitoring of selected newspapers by Wales Greyhound Forum Planned (2006-07).</p>

The Wales Greyhound Forum is aware of the database of greyhound owners that has been established by the NGRC and that the NGRC is using this to find out what happens to greyhounds when they retire by writing to owners of retired greyhounds.

Because it is likely that only those owners who have ensured that their greyhounds meet “acceptable” fates will respond to such enquiries, the Wales Greyhound Forum believes that this method will be useful in identifying the numbers of greyhounds meeting fates 7, 8 and 9 but that it will not cast any light on greyhounds meeting unacceptable fates 1 to 6.

The research planned in Wales should lead to strong, survey based evidence for four fates: 1,3,6 and 8.

Enquiries made previously in Wales has also led to good evidence based upon interviews with key informants about the numbers of greyhounds meeting fate 4.

The research planned in Wales should also allow an initial assessment to be made of the nature and the potential numbers of greyhounds meeting fates 2, 5, 7, and 9.

The key point concerning this research is that it is not difficult to conceptualise or to execute *given the will to do so*.

The fact that no such research has been carried out or even proposed by the Greyhound Racing Industry in England to date raises the question about whether a genuine desire exists to arrive at the truth.

Given that the Sunday Times article has drawn attention to the potentially huge numbers of greyhounds being slaughtered in a systematic way the case for proper research appears to be unanswerable. The Wales Greyhound Forum and the National assembly for Wales is carrying out such research in Wales and would strongly recommend that the Westminster APGAW undertake a similar task in England to establish beyond doubt the facts of the situation.