

# ARE THE IRISH AND UK GREYHOUND INDUSTRIES ON THE ROPES?



*by Lucinda Read, Greyhound Compassion*

**THE** summer months saw significant revelations about the Irish and UK greyhound racing industries, both of which have galvanised the respective regulatory bodies to puff up a semblance of responsibility for greyhound welfare. Equally the general public, greyhound welfare advocates and campaigners have been justifiably outraged by each industry's lacklustre performance and their prioritisation of commercialism over welfare.

In June, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) published the 2018 end of life and injury figures for racing

greyhounds. This is the second year for which data has been put in the public domain. Over the last two years 2,032 greyhounds have died at the hands of the industry (499 on the racetrack).

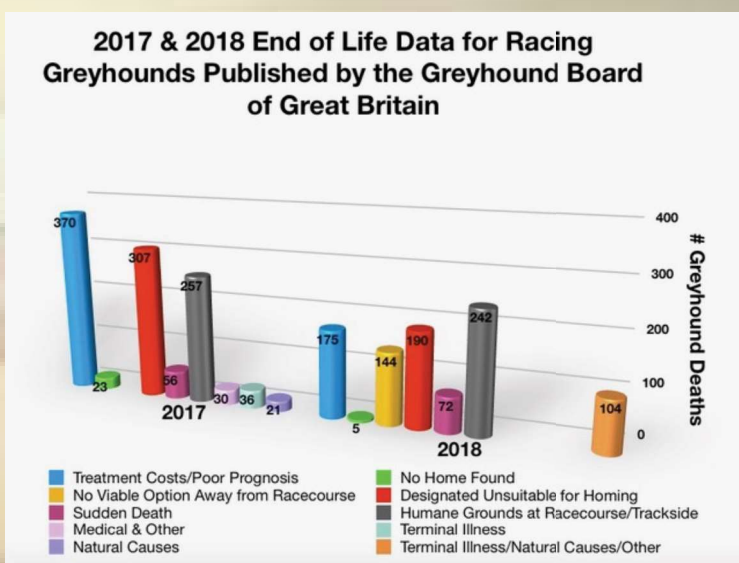
The 2018 figures show how and why the greyhound died or was put down:

- 242 euthanised trackside on 'humane grounds'
- 324 for whom treatment was deemed too expensive, there was 'no viable option' away from the racecourse or no home was found

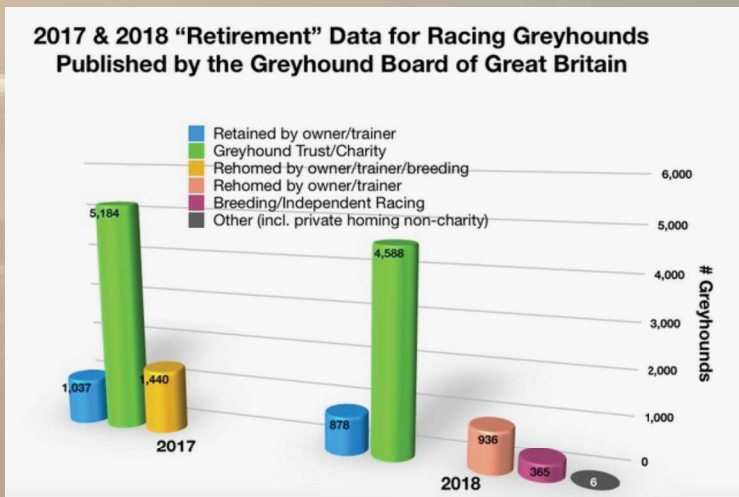
- 190 were killed due to being ‘unsuitable for homing’
- 72 died from ‘sudden death’

There were 4,963 injuries (out of 426,139 dog runs) in 2018 and 4,837 injuries (out of 419,385 dog runs) in 2017. The graphs below display the GBGB’s 2017 and 2018 data. Over the two years some of the category labels have been changed by the GBGB. In the 2018 dataset the GBGB introduced numbers for dogs going to independent racing (also known as “flapping”) which is not regulated by the GBGB but falls under the remit of the local council; and re-grouped some of the end of life headings, introducing “No Viable Option Away from Racecourse”. The labels have been taken at face value for the purpose of the graphs in order to respect the presentation of data at GBGB source.

**2017 & 2018 End of Life Data for Racing Greyhounds Published by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain**



**2017 & 2018 “Retirement” Data for Racing Greyhounds Published by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain**



The injuries and deaths suffered by greyhounds, companion animals and sentient beings, are egregious and have no place in our society. The published data fails to present the total number of greyhounds racing (widely estimated to be 14,000 at any one time) and does not include the “saplings” who fail to make the grade.

The GBGB complemented the publication of 2017 data in 2018 with the launch of its Greyhound Commitment, an eight point plan aimed at putting its welfare house in order. The Greyhound Commitment comprises: driving down unnecessary greyhound deaths by targeting delinquent trainers/owners without any change to the rules which do permit killing on economic grounds; reducing injuries; boosting funding from the bookmakers for welfare; the integrity of racing; training personnel; improving homing statistics; introducing a code of practice for residential kennels; a system to track the dogs from registration to retirement; a welfare hotline; and an injury recovery scheme. It also introduces an owners’ charter.

Notably within the next three years the GBGB wants to see the deaths on “economic grounds” and at the track on “humane grounds” due to injuries halved. This kind of objective setting completely ignores that companion animals are at the heart of the target the GBGB is establishing for itself. Based on the current stats, this would translate into around 325 permitted ‘unnecessary’ deaths in the third year as well as the loss of life it will take to reach the GBGB’s goal in the intervening two years. Based on current averages this could mean a total of 1,543 deaths trackside and on economic grounds over the next three years. It also means that deaths under all other headings in the GBGB stats remain permissible. This cannot be a serious proposition. Surely a nation of animal lovers cannot accept putting dogs at risk of death for the sake of a gambling industry?

The GBGB had the opportunity to demonstrate its welfare commitment during the few days of a heatwave which swept the UK in July. In 2018 we had a long, hot summer. Racing continued and the GBGB came in for criticism. This year the GBGB agreed its hot weather policy the week before the forecast heatwave in July: “racing should be cancelled or suspended if temperatures at the track reach 34 degrees”. This decision followed the 2019 Greyhound Derby which was held in June in Nottingham in 33 degree heat. It was made in spite of the Society of Greyhound Veterinarians suggesting, “If the temperature is in the region of 28 to 30 degrees serious consideration should be given to suspending racing and that racing should not take place in environmental temperatures in excess of 30 degrees”. It is extremely rare for UK summers to hit 34 degrees. The GBGB hot weather policy presents a temperature that is reasonably close to summer highs of 24-28

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degrees (30 degrees max) but sufficiently hot so as to be rarely implemented and protect racing. In our July 2019 heatwave, greyhound racing started on one of the days at around 11:00 at one track and finished at about 21:30 at another stadium, with racing having taken place all day across a number of racetracks. Temperatures on that day ranged between 24 and 32 degrees at the racing locations. Only a couple of tracks cancelled their racing. In fact, one of the tracks which had cancelled racing in hot weather, proceeded a few days later to hold the county cup semi-finals on the hottest day since records began (the highest temperature of the day of 38.7 degrees was recorded at Cambridge University Botanical Gardens). Making an attraction of its event the stadium offered free ice-cream to the children because the race date coincided with the start of the school summer holidays. They were comfortable in going ahead because the temperature at the time of the race was forecast to be lower than the GBGB cut-off. There is still no requirement for trainers' vans or track kennels to have air conditioning. Yet all through the heatwave dog owners were on red alert that heatstroke could be a potential risk on dog walks. I spent the day keeping my pet ex-racing greyhound in the shade and cool. No sign of resistance from him and no desire to gallop around the garden.

We are also highly sceptical of the likely success of the objective to increase the funding from the bookmakers for welfare. This has been analogous to drawing blood out of a stone over the last four years. Earlier this year the racing industry and the Government Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport gained commitment from some bookmakers to make a voluntary contribution from their internet betting turnover. This is in addition to the 0.6%

voluntary levy some bookies make from their retail operations. While the full extent of the combined amounts remains to be seen, it's widely thought the final outcome will be wildly below actual welfare requirements. We have heard that it has undershot expectations by 70%. In June the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee Chairman announced a robust plea for a statutory levy on greyhound racing (1% of gross turnover) to cover the long-term financing

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**CORAL**  
**THE WELFARE OF OUR GREYHOUNDS**

**Here at Hove, Greyhound welfare is our top priority. This is how we're helping our four-legged friends out in the heat:**

On the way to and from the racetrack, the Greyhounds travel in temperature-controlled vehicles that are adapted to provide maximum comfort. The vehicles are checked regularly by a GBGB representative to ensure conditions are optimal.

Our Vets - which are on duty for every race meeting - inspect all Greyhounds as soon as they arrive.

We provide fresh drinking water and a dog bath for the Greyhounds to paddle through, instantly cooling their paws and, in turn, their whole body.

Each Greyhound is also checked immediately before running as a final measure to be certain they are race-ready!

During heightened temperatures (above 28°C) we implement special measures to ensure optimal comfort for our Greyhounds during racing. These include shortened or cancelled parades, and various methods of rapidly cooling the Greyhounds - such as a pool of water in the middle of the track for them to dip into after a race, shaded areas, buckets filled with fresh iced water, air conditioned kennels and vehicles, as well as the aforementioned dog bath.

Every Greyhound is also checked by a vet immediately after running a race - once they have cooled down they'll return to relax in the air-conditioned kennel with more fresh drinking water.

Regarding the racing this evening - we have cancelled trials as a precaution (limited trials may proceed if the weather permits) and kennelling was available early for trainers to avoid waiting in rush-hour traffic and outside the gate.

Our first race - due off at 18:27 - has a forecasted temperature of 27.5°C, which is within the GBGB Hot Weather Policy. Should the temperature exceed 34°C at any point throughout the evening, racing will be delayed until a suitable temperature is reached.

**We'd like to take this opportunity to reiterate that Greyhound welfare is our number 1 priority.**

**As seen on Tuesday - racing will be cancelled or delayed in the interest of our Greyhounds.**



**Hove Stadium @HoveGreyhounds · 1h**  
**SCHOOLS OUT!**

To celebrate the start of the summer holidays, all children who come to tonight's race meeting will receive a FREE ice cream!!

[#summerholidays](#) [#schoolsout](#) [#free](#) [#icecream](#) [#hottestdayoftheyear](#)  
[#keepcool](#) [#hovestadium](#) [#thelaceto](#)



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4



# Heat Stroke In Dogs

## Heat Stroke Kills Dogs

Every year our emergency vets treat hundreds of heat stroke cases and, heartbreakingly, some end in tragedy. Many are a result of owners exercising their dogs between 8am and 8pm when temperatures can be at their peak.

Heat-related illnesses are almost always preventable, but it's critical to know when dogs are at risk. Our handy guide shows when it's safe for your dog outside.



### OUTDOOR TEMPERATURE

**32+°C**

Heat stroke is a major risk regardless of condition, size or breed.

10/10  
Risk rating

**28-31°C**

Dangerous for all, but life-threatening for larger breeds and puppies as well as dogs who are flat-faced or obese.

9/10  
Risk rating

**24-27°C**

Extreme caution should be taken as most dogs, particularly those who are large, obese, flat-faced and very young, will find these temperatures very uncomfortable.

8/10  
Risk rating

**20-23°C**

Even at this temperature dogs are at risk of getting heat stroke if exercised too rigorously, or suffering from an underlying condition such as obesity or breathing difficulties.

6/10  
Risk rating

**16-19°C**

Generally safe to exercise dogs at all times of day, although keep a close eye on large, obese and flat-faced breeds.

4/10  
Risk rating

**12-15°C**

No evidence of heat stroke risk so enjoy your walk.

1/10  
Risk rating

Be prepared this summer.  
Save your pet emergency  
service number now.  
[vets-now.com/summer](http://vets-now.com/summer)

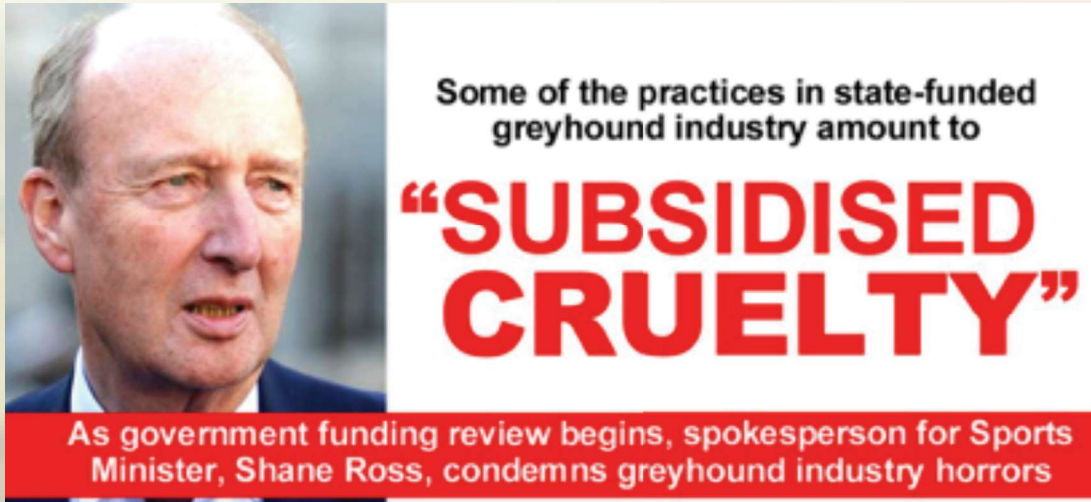
Heatstroke: CanineEdge, Orem, UT, 84057, Company reg #228852

**Vetsnow**  
Your pet emergency service



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of a better greyhound welfare system. He was emphatic that welfare needs must be met and these greyhounds are “animals not assets”. The Government response did not indicate an appetite for a statutory levy. The bookmakers’ willingness is likely to decline further. **Government has reduced the maximum stake on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (deemed the ‘crack cocaine of gambling’) in betting shops from £100 to £2. This will adversely impact bookmakers’ business and a quarter of high street shops are anticipated to close in the UK as a result.** Moreover, it is a well-known fact that while greyhound racing depends on dangerously configured tracks and significant overbreeding, money is not the complete answer.



On the subject of overbreeding, **greyhound racing in Ireland turned from a national tradition to a national disgrace in 60 minutes one night in June.** An RTE Investigates TV programme with empirical evidence of highly graphic and upsetting footage showed the dark side of greyhound racing in Ireland. The RTE revelations were based on a report the Irish



Greyhound Board (IGB) had commissioned and kept secret since 2017 because it was considered commercially sensitive. The IGB is a commercial semi-state body which receives an annual government subsidy to the tune of €16m. **The report said that the IGB is not a “racing-centric” organisation, rather its focus is on breeding, it is producing in the region of 1,000% more greyhounds each year than would be needed to sustain a greyhound racing industry. The tv coverage exposed the culling of 6,000 greyhounds per annum.** The reasons for the cull were broken down into: “those who failed to produce qualifying times” (2,673); “failure to produce desired entry level times” (1,989); and an “unacceptable decline in performance” (1,326). Viewers saw greyhounds being killed in knackereries for a few Euros and

greyhound corpses being driven to waste containers by a JCB.

The RTE programme sent shock waves through Ireland which then ricocheted across the press and social media in the following days. **People were incandescent at the footage they saw of extreme suffering and they were indignant that the public purse is subsidising such a cruel industry.** An Irish

Examiner article set the issue out in very clear terms: in Ireland “sick children don’t benefit from ring-fenced taxation. Neither do people with mental health challenges, nor elderly people, nor homeless people. Nobody does, in fact, except horses and greyhounds”.

The TV programme catalysed a torrent of letters, tweets and emails complaining to Irish Government officials. The heart-rending footage provoked celebrity support and led to discussions in the Irish Parliament. The Irish Sports Minister called for resignations over the greyhound racing scandal, saying it amounted to subsidised cruelty. The Labour Party in Ireland said it was reserving its position on state funding for the IGB. The IGB was called to present to the Joint Committee for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. A petition was issued calling for greyhound racing to be banned and one

demanding government subsidies to be discontinued. The latter topped a quarter of a million signatures.

Such was the indignation of people in Ireland that the peaceful protests at Irish racetracks swelled immensely. Commercial entities like Barry's Tea, Treacy's Hotel and FBD Insurance withdrew from greyhound racing sponsorship agreements. Animal feed producer Connolly's RED MILLS also ceased its sponsorship of greyhound racing saying it was "horrified by the completely unacceptable acts that were broadcast" and added that "no-one who cares about animals can condone the practises depicted in the broadcast". However, as stated in the Irish Examiner of 10 August 2019 "the company has since done a U-turn and has recommitted to supporting greyhound racing." According to the Examiner "this was done on the basis that its contributions would be ringfenced" for a care fund established for greyhound wellbeing.

On the ropes, the IGB came out with a series of statements. One of which was a clear demonstration that they are attempting to put their welfare house in order. Some of the content was reminiscent of the GBGB's Greyhound Commitment: short-term and medium-term measures; foster homes; extra financial support for greyhound homing; a confidential phone-line ("The Greyhound Care Line"); a code of practice for care and welfare of greyhounds; an injury support scheme; some work to be completed on statutory regulation of euthanasia and a traceability system; a care fund with 50% of all sponsorship going into the fund; and a homing initiative in the USA - yes they are going to fly the poor greyhounds halfway around the world to find them homes after a life of racing in Ireland.

There is a connection between the UK and Irish elements. **About 80% of the greyhounds racing in the UK are bred in Ireland.** The report behind the RTE programme revealed how Irish bred greyhounds are sold to the UK at 50% of the cost of producing the greyhound puppies. This means **the Irish taxpayer is subsidising the 'product' being sold to the UK at a loss. Thereby making the 'cheap product' affordable to the UK**

**customers.** Surely when the prices go up to remedy the Irish losses, the UK clients will feel the pinch? Outrage is circling around the industries and the impact is inextricably linked. The disapproval and shock in Ireland will have a knock on effect in the UK as the IGB attempts to salvage its reputation to secure its government subsidy.

Meanwhile, the British dog-loving public cannot countenance the fact that dog deaths are permissible albeit targeted for a reduction in three years. Although horrific, the RTE programme coupled with the GBGB's publication of injury and death stats, along with underfunding, have to be a major step in the demise of greyhound racing.



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Facebook: [Greyhound Compassion \(UK\)](https://www.facebook.com/GreyhoundCompassionUK)