

# THIS IS

# GREYHOUND RACING

## A BRIEF HISTORY

Greyhound racing first became popular in the 20th century, with the first race taking place in Manchester in 1926. However, the use of greyhounds in 'sport' far preceded this, with hare coursing a widely popular pastime encouraged by Queen Elizabeth I. Hare coursing involved greyhounds and other sighthounds chasing a live hare for the purposes of 'sport' or hunting. Nowadays, greyhounds chase a mechanical hare around an oval track. Both of these 'sports' are incredibly cruel.

Whilst millions of spectators watched greyhounds race in the 1920s, crowds have dwindled significantly since then. Modern day greyhound racing mainly serves an online market: greyhounds forced to run around gruelling oval tracks under the glare of cameras and silent spectators behind TV screens.

Around eighty years ago there were 77 greyhound tracks in Britain. There are now 20 GBGB (Greyhound Board of Great Britain) licensed greyhound tracks in Britain, and two independent or 'flapping tracks'. (one in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland). There is another track in Northern Ireland, regulated by the Coursing Club.

## INJURIES & DEATHS

The welfare issues associated with greyhound racing are distressing and pervasive. The oval shape of the race track contributes to staggering numbers of injuries and deaths each year. [[Read Andrew Knight's report here](#)]. This is due to the prevailing forces at play and the 'bunching' of dogs that can occur on bends. In 2023 alone, there were 4238 injuries, and 109 dogs were killed on track.

**109**  
TRACK  
**FATALITIES**  
IN 2023

**ACCORDING TO GBGB DATA**

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## WELFARE ISSUES

Away from the race track, the life of a greyhound can be miserable and isolated. Most dogs have to live in barren – and often unclean and gloomy – kennels, with little social interaction, enrichment or play. Those kennelled in pairs must be continuously muzzled, which causes distress. Dogs are often handled roughly, shouted at and left with untreated wounds. Investigations have uncovered horrific cruelty in ‘kennels’: from dogs being neglected, malnourished, and left to rot away next to the dead bodies of other dogs.

Doping is another prevalent issue in greyhound racing. Between 2016-2022, the GBGB reported 318 positive drug tests in greyhounds. Morphine was found in dogs, which masks pain - meaning dogs would continue to race despite their injuries, putting them at risk of further harm. In Scotland and Ireland, cocaine has been found in drugged dogs. ([Grey2K USA](#)).

Additionally, dogs face ‘culling’ at every stage of their racing career. It is unknown how many puppies are disposed of before they are even registered, known to the industry as ‘wastage’. Dogs are discarded when not performing ‘well enough’; a 2019 RTÉ investigation revealed that of the 16,000 greyhounds born in Ireland each year, 6000 are killed for not running fast enough. It also highlighted a report which stated that approximately ten times more puppies are bred than are required to race. Around 80% of greyhounds racing in the UK are bred in Ireland.

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The overbreeding of dogs has led to unbelievable cruelty. In 2006, a Sunday Times investigation revealed a builder had killed 10,000 greyhounds with a bolt gun and buried them in a mass grave. He had charged £10 per dog. Other stories include Rusty, who had his ears hacked off to avoid identification, (greyhounds have an ID number tattooed in their ears) and was shot in the head and left to die after not performing 'well enough' in a race, and dogs being thrown into the sea by their owners.

Across the regulated racing greyhound population, there were 3145 deaths between 2018-2023. This figure includes dogs being killed on the racing track from horrific injuries, but also because veterinary bills were deemed too expensive, no home could be found, or they were considered unsuitable for homing. The onus falls on numerous rescue centres (which are already at 'breaking point') to try and rehome these gentle, sensitive dogs.

Heartbreakingly, numerous dogs are exported once no longer of use to the industry. Dogs have been sent to places such as Pakistan to illegally race in agonising conditions, hunt and fight other animals and/or be bred from. In China, many greyhounds are sent to also be illegally raced and bred from, before being slaughtered and sold for meat.

Over a billion pounds was bet on greyhound racing in the UK in 2023. Whilst the 'sport' has seen significant decrease in popularity over the last hundred years, the industry is still prevalent enough to facilitate the suffering of thousands of beautiful dogs. It is morally unjustifiable for animals to be put in harm's way, all in the name of 'sport' and 'entertainment'. Anyone who is lucky enough to have met an adopted greyhound will know them to be sweet, loving, gentle dogs who love a good comfy snooze on the sofa. That so many are having to face the most excruciating experiences every day is simply heartbreaking. Every animal deserves to live a life of peace and freedom; no animal should be used in sport. We are determined to bring this cruel practice to an end.

## WILL YOU HELP US?

For updates on how to help our campaign, head to [animalaid.org.uk](https://animalaid.org.uk)

