



Registered Scottish Charity SC039701

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13 April 2024

Findlay Carson
Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Carson

RE: RAI Committee meeting on 20 March 2024

Further to my letter dated 31 March 2024 we write to draw your attention to 2 recent events which we believe further evidences the dishonesty in Mr Stark and Mr Alcorn's testimony.

1. Call for help – 36 greyhounds from one kennel needing immediate rescue space (11 April 2024).

As stated in our initial letter "The constant throughput of greyhounds means we (SGS) always have a waiting list, as do all other rescues. Over the past few years in particular it has become increasingly difficult working in dog rescue generally." "Although we work closely with other rescues up and down the country, the number of dogs being given up far outweighs the collective rescue spaces available. The racing industry takes little if any responsibility for the dogs it discards so charities such as SGS who rely on public donations pick up the cost."

The urgent call for help with 36 greyhounds went out across social media within hours, which is the fastest way to reach a reach a large number of people. However, very few of the greyhounds have been saved so far. This is a frequent occurrence, trainers are permitted to keep an unlimited number of dogs so if the kennel closes for whatever reason all of those dogs need rehomed or euthanised. Unfortunately in this case SGS couldn't help any of these dogs as our kennels and foster homes are full. Neither can we can't help the 3 other greyhounds we received a call about this morning from a GBGB registered trainer based in Scotland. SGS currently has 19 dogs in foster homes, 15 dogs in kennels and an infinite waiting list.

2. Open letter from "a group of passionate stakeholders in the sport of greyhound racing made up of trainers, kennel staff, breeders, owners, journalists and more" to GBGB.

This letter, signed by approximately 450 individuals when last checked, contradicts Mr Stark and Mr Alcorn's accounts even further:

“We the undersigned, a group of passionate stakeholders in the sport of greyhound racing made up of trainers, kennel staff, breeders, owners, journalists and more, have observed with alarm the rapid decline in standards and morale across the sport in recent years.

We are concerned that without urgent action, greyhound racing, which was once the second most popular spectator sport after football, will suffer sufficient reputational damage that it will lose its social license.

While we acknowledge the recent improvements in welfare, we feel it is essential to restore high standards and a professional image across greyhound racing if we are to repair its reputation, reinvigorate participants and stem the flow of owners, trainers young and old, and others leaving the sport.

We call on the governing body, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB), to urgently implement the recommendations listed below in order to ensure the sport that we love has a viable future.

Licensing of track staff to be subject to achieving and demonstrating a sufficient level of knowledge regarding their particular role, eg hare driving, track preparation, paddock duties etc

To implement an evidence-led Continuing Professional Development programme to ensure those entering the sport can see a viable future and the opportunity to progress their career, while maintaining the best standard of practice within their roles and learning from those best placed to share working knowledge

To ensure promoters observe a basic set of standards regarding the smooth, safe and prompt running of meetings

To ensure promoters invest in regular maintenance of track surface, and all mechanical aspects of running a meeting - hare, traps, lighting, cameras etc.

To ensure track staff receive sufficient training to complete their duties to a high standard and that their appearance and dress is professional, maintaining the desired image of the sport

Racing offices to work closely with track vets to ensure dogs receive the correct review before racing to ensure unwell, injured and lame greyhounds are prevented from racing, with added focus on dogs who were suspected to be lame on previous outings

To ensure the racing schedule is proportionate to the racing strength of each track - cutting down on the number of race meetings to ensure dogs don't race too often and that empty traps are avoided

To create a working group charged with devising measures to ease the rehoming crisis

To ensure promoters supply individual injury statistics for each track

To implement a roadmap for the future which delivers a more sustainable form of racing:

discouraging large kennels which own a huge number of dogs. removing the stipulation for a minimum number of dogs a trainer must have to secure a contract at a track, thus removing one of the main barriers to new trainers entering the sport

to discourage run money-only deals to lead a review in to the prize money structure in the UK, which does not reward excellence and in its current form encourages running dogs purely for run money with no aspirations of excelling and maximising their performance

to remove the idea of trainers being handicapped to a win percentage - every dog should be handicapped on its merit, encouraging the trainer to get the best out of their dogs, and not limiting the whole kennel to a specific win percentage

To lobby government and the betting industry to establish a statutory levy, similar to that in horse racing, to aid greyhound welfare and the general raising of standards across the industry. This is an initiative that was recommended by a 2015/16 crossparty report of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, which at the time included current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

To launch initiatives to encourage greyhound ownership, with the aim of re-engaging with previous owners who have left the sport, and attracting new ones

To make a concerted effort to attract sponsorship and television coverage for the sport's major competitions, in order to raise the sport's profile and grow its audience

To encourage promoters to schedule racing, particularly open racing, at times which are convenient and attractive to owners and other racegoers

To investigate the exportation of dogs to countries with no welfare standards as a pressing issue, rather than reacting to individual cases

To implement a more consistent regime of drug testing, with agreed timescales for consistent and proportionate penalties

To review the current make up of the GBGB board which has led to a conflict of interest regarding decision making over the sport's best interests and board members' commercial interests. Also to consider fairer representation on the board for a wider range of stakeholders, and more transparency in decision making”

Major stakeholders in greyhound racing demanding these changes is admittance of the real difficulties within the industry, in our opinion. We appreciate that the industry regulator GBGB has acknowledged improvements are still needed, but we feel the evidence the committee heard minimised the issue.

Thank you for your continued diligence in consideration of all the available evidence around this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Scottish Greyhound Sanctuary
Management Committee