

## Debate Pack

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# Debate on an e-petition relating to greyhound racing

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## Summary

A debate will be held in Westminster Hall at 4.30pm on Monday 28 March 2022 on an [e-petition](#) relating to greyhound welfare. The subject for the debate has been nominated by the Petitions Committee and the debate will be opened by Christina Rees MP.

# 1

## Summary

A debate on [e-petition 554073 Ban greyhound racing to end unnecessary deaths & suffering of racing dogs](#) will take place in Westminster Hall on 28 March 2022. The petition closed on 30 April 2021 and received 104,885 signatures.

The petition calls for an end to greyhound racing:

The Government must introduce legislation to abolish greyhound racing, via managed shutdown of activities, and ensure welfare of redundant dogs through a levy on the industry. In 2019 Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) data confirmed 4970 injuries & 710 deaths (14 per week).

Thousands of greyhounds are forced to race for worldwide betting markets. We believe that the welfare of racing greyhounds is not adequately protected by Animal Welfare Act 2006, GBGB, or any independent body, and that greyhounds endure unavoidable suffering on tracks that can be dangerously configured, race in extreme weather & can be housed in kennels that have not been independently inspected to gain UKAS accreditation, despite commitments to DEFRA.<sup>1</sup>

[In its response the Government did not support a ban](#) and set out measures that have been introduced since 2010 by the industry, through the work of the [Greyhound Board of Great Britain \(GBGB\)](#). The GBGB is the regulating body for licenced greyhound racing in Great Britain. However, animal welfare is devolved responsibility, so regulation of greyhound racing welfare lies with each devolved administration.

The Government sees the GBGBs work as an example of how action has been taken without further regulation being required:

The Government has welcomed the Greyhound Commitment as an example of how, as a modern regulatory body, GBGB can initiate welfare reform without the need for further legislation. The Government will continue to monitor GBGB's progress against the Commitment. Should further measures and protections be required the Government stands ready to consider options which are targeted, effective and proportionate.<sup>2</sup>

There are [23 greyhound racing tracks in the UK of which 19 are licenced](#) by GBGB. While the GBGB licencing covers the majority of greyhound racing there is also [unregulated greyhound races \(flapping\)](#) at unlicensed venues. These are legal but are independent, do not have any licencing requirements and dogs are not registered, although welfare legislation such as the Animal Welfare Act 2006 would still apply. Animal welfare charities have raised [concerns about the welfare implications for dogs](#) raced at these venues.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [e-petition 554073 Ban greyhound racing to end unnecessary deaths & suffering of racing dogs](#)

<sup>2</sup> [e-petition 554073 Ban greyhound racing to end unnecessary deaths & suffering of racing dogs](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Forever Hounds Trust, Greyhound racing – the forgotten ones, 5 September 2019](#)

## 1.1

# The Greyhound Board of Great Britain

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain put forward in 2018 a [ten-point Greyhound Commitment](#) which it has been working to implement since then. The commitment covers the following:

- Greyhound welfare and safety is at the heart of everything we do.
- Every racing greyhound is treated with care and respect throughout its career.
- Our independently verified injury rates remain the lowest in the world and will improve further still.
- Wherever possible, every dog leaving racing enjoys a long and happy retirement.
- Every race is run fairly and safely, and attending a race meeting is an enjoyable and fun experience for all involved.
- Those working within the sport have access to training at the beginning of their careers, and ongoing, accredited professional development.
- Funding received from the betting industry significantly contributes to greyhound welfare.
- Together, we continue to promote our sport and nurture the public's love of greyhounds.<sup>4</sup>

The GBGB has implemented a number of measures since 2018, which were listed in the Government response to the petition and include:

- Publishing annual independently verified injury, euthanasia and retirement statistics from GBGB tracks.
- Extending an existing UK Accreditation Scheme (UKAS) [to cover training kennels](#) from January 2021, in addition to existing coverage of racetracks. These will include a minimum of two unannounced visits a year.
- Introduction of [an Injury Recovery Scheme](#) which provides grants to trainers to cover 50% of the cost of treating career ending injuries so dogs can be rehomed, as an alternative to euthanasia.
- Introduction of a [Greyhound Retirement Scheme](#) which requires owners to pay £200 pounds when a dog is registered with GBGB to race, which is

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<sup>4</sup> [GBGB, The Greyhound Commitment \[Website visited 25 March 2021\]](#)

matched by GBGB. The £400 is held to be put towards rehoming costs for the dog when it is retired to [an approved centre](#).<sup>5</sup>

The work of the GBGB receives financial support from the [British Greyhound Racing Fund](#). The Fund receives voluntary payments from bookmakers who are encouraged to pay 0.6% of their greyhound turnover. In 2019/20 the Fund collected £8.87m from bookmakers, an increase of £6.95m in the previous year.<sup>6</sup> A debate took place in Parliament in 2019, calling for the introduction of a [statutory rather than voluntary gambling levy on greyhound racing](#), which the Government did not support.<sup>7</sup>

The GBGB launched [A Good Life for Every Greyhound – Welfare 2025 and Beyond](#) in September 2021. This aims to “develop the responsibility of the bookmaking industry for funding welfare” in addition to taking:

A holistic view of welfare focused on animals’ physiological and psychological needs across their lifetimes. It will focus not only on mitigating risks of injury and disease but aims also to identify, develop and implement management practices which optimise animal experience.

## 1.2 Greyhound welfare statistics

The [Greyhound Board of Great Britain \(GBGB\)](#) began to routinely publish data on greyhound welfare in 2017. The data is published to support monitoring of GBGB’s [Greyhound Commitment](#),

The table below shows available data on track related injuries and fatalities from 2017 to 2020, the most recent published estimates.

Figures show a decrease in the number of greyhounds sustaining injuries at GBGB licensed tracks in 2020. While previous years saw annual injury figures ranging broadly between around 4,800 to 5,000, in 2020 a track related injury figure of 3,575 was reported.

In part, the lower numbers in 2020 are a consequence of fewer runs as a result of track closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. However, the injury rate (injuries as a percentage of all runs) is slightly lower than in previous years.

The number of deaths has also fallen since 2020. However, the rate of fatalities as a proportion of runs has remained relatively constant.

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<sup>5</sup> [e-petition 554073 Ban greyhound racing to end unnecessary deaths & suffering of racing dogs](#)

<sup>6</sup> [e-petition 554073 Ban greyhound racing to end unnecessary deaths & suffering of racing dogs](#)

<sup>7</sup> [HC Deb c259 25 June 2019](#)

## Track related greyhound injuries and fatalities

Great Britain

	Injuries		Fatalities	
	Number	% of total runs	Number	% of total runs
2017	4,837	1.15%	257	0.06%
2018	4,963	1.16%	242	0.06%
2019	4,970	1.21%	207	0.05%
2020	3,575	1.12%	200	0.06%

Source: [GBGB injury and retirement data](#)

Data is also available on overall deaths – ie track related as well as those where dogs were euthanised or died sudden or natural deaths.

The table below shows the data on wider deaths grouped by broad reason for the fatality. Overall, deaths have fallen by 595 between 2017 and 2020, a reduction of 602 deaths.

In 2019, GBGB set a target to halve the number of greyhounds put to sleep due to high treatment costs or because no home could be found for them. In 2018, 180 greyhounds were put to sleep for these reasons but by 2020 the number had fallen to 24.

## Greyhound deaths due to sudden or natural causes and being put to sleep

Great Britain

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017 to 2020	
					Number	%
Put to sleep because of:						
Treatment costs	333	175	123	24	-309	-93%
No home found	22	5	0	0	-22	-100%
Designated unsuitable for homing	270	190	83	23	-247	-91%
Humane grounds trackside	257	242	207	200	-57	-22%
Sudden death	55	72	91	41	-14	-25%
Terminal illness, natural causes & other	76	248	206	123	47	62%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,013</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>-602</b>	<b>-59%</b>

Source: [GBGB injury and retirement data](#)

The GBGB data also shows improvements in the number of greyhounds being homed on retirement. Its data shows that 95% (7,089) of registered greyhounds leaving the sport in 2020 were rehomed compared with 86% (6,391) in 2017.

## 1.3

### Animal welfare concerns

Animal welfare charities have expressed continued concerns about greyhound racing, including the number of dogs bred, the welfare of dogs before they are raced, the rate of deaths and injuries, and how greyhounds are treated and euthanised after they are retired.

A number of animal welfare charities are members of the Greyhound Forum which works to engage with the greyhound industry. An RSPCA briefing [Greyhound racing: welfare and regulation issues](#) published in April 2021 summarised the charity's concerns on welfare in the industry as follows:

- Some progress has been made against the [Greyhound Commitment] targets but those for euthanasia have recently been moved back to 2023.
- Voluntary contributions from bookmakers have been received but a statutory levy, which would provide a secure and consistent income is not forthcoming.
- The absence of a secure and consistent source of funding means that the ability for every greyhound to be afforded at least a life worth living appears increasingly unlikely.
- The RSPCA and Dogs Trust are concerned about both these issues and have written to the DCMS and Defra.<sup>8</sup>

The RSPCA and the Dog Trust have since then, in December 2021, commissioned an [independent review of racing greyhound welfare in the UK](#) due to report in the first half of 2022. This is because the charities still have concerns that “there remain significant welfare issues which urgently need tackling to ensure that welfare is adequately safeguarded”.<sup>9</sup>

The [Forever Hound Trust, which supports the petition to ban greyhound racing](#), set out its experience of dealing with greyhounds that need rehoming as follows:

As a charity dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and homing of greyhounds, Forever Hounds Trust knows only too well the suffering some of the dogs in the racing industry have suffered. The dogs coming into the care of the charity often carry the scars of racing with them, both physical and emotional.

Many more do not make it out of the racing industry alive.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [RSPCA, Greyhound Racing: Welfare and Regulation Issues, April 2021](#)

<sup>9</sup> [The Dog Trust, Greyhound Welfare Review, 20 December 2021](#)

<sup>10</sup> [The Forever Hound Trust, Please sign petition to phase out greyhound racing, 2 November 2021](#)

Other greyhound charities such as [Caged Nationwide](#) and [Greyhound Protection UK](#) also support a ban, which sets out its welfare concerns as follows:

Racing dogs are generally kennelled for 23 hours a day, if not longer, with two dogs commonly sharing one small kennel. Standards of kennels are invariably basic to say the least and muzzles are used as a long term solution where fighting may occur.

The condition of many greyhounds offloaded by their trainer/owner continues to shock even the most experienced rescue personnel. Injuries sustained annually total 5 figures and result in hundreds of greyhounds being euthanased; the majority solely on economic grounds.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.4 Greyhound racing in other countries

Greyhound racing is legal in 7 countries: UK, Ireland, United States, New Zealand, Australia, Vietnam and Mexico.

Despite the limited number of countries where races is legal, there are reports of illegal racing and hunting with greyhounds in a number of countries, including China and Pakistan<sup>12</sup>. There are also concerns about [exports of greyhounds, and associated welfare concerns](#), from countries where racing is legal to countries where it is not allowed.

There were reports of Australian greyhounds, from Victoria, being exported to China (against the industry's rules) in 2021 via the UK.<sup>13</sup> Exports of greyhound dogs [from Ireland to China and Pakistan, via the UK](#) were reported in 2019. This was the result of an RTE investigation in Ireland, [Greyhounds Running for their Lives](#), which included reports of significant numbers of dogs being euthanised because they are not fast enough. The report also referred to data that showed [36% of greyhounds registered by the Irish Coursing Club were exported to the UK](#).<sup>14</sup>

There are more recent report, in 2022, of greyhound champions being [exported from Australia directly to China](#) as companion animals against the industry's rules.<sup>15</sup> Greyhounds Victoria, have introduced a number of measures in recent years to discourage exports, including a [Desexing and Dental grants](#) scheme to cover the cost of neutering dogs before retirement, removing their export value for breeding.

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<sup>11</sup> [Greyhound Protection UK, Anti Racing \[website visited 25 March 2021\]](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Mirror, Greyhounds being shipped to Pakistan for illegal races and breeding pig fighters, 20 March 2021](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Racenet, Integrity unit investigating illegal exports to China, 17 August 2021](#)

<sup>14</sup> [RTE, Thousands of greyhounds 'culled each year' for not being fast enough, 26 June 2019](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Crime News Weekly, GREYHOUNDS GONE FOR GREED! Champion dogs ending up in China for breeding against Australian racing industry rules, 22 March 2022](#)

## 2

# Press releases and reports

Dogs Trust press release

20 December 2021

[Greyhound Welfare Review](#)

Greyhound Board of Great Britain press release

10 September 2021

[GBGB Launches 'A Good Life for Every Greyhound – Welfare 2025 and Beyond'](#)

Greyhound Board of Great Britain press release

1 September 2021

[GBGB Marks One Year of the Greyhound Retirement Scheme](#)

Greyhound board of Great Britain press release

21 July 2021

[GBGB expands funding available through its Injury Recovery Scheme](#)

Greyhound Board of Great Britain press release

16 July 2021

[Over £1million contributed by GBGB through the Greyhound Retirement Scheme](#)

RSPCA briefing

April 2021

[Greyhound racing: welfare and regulation issues \[.pdf\]](#)

Debate on an e-petition relating to greyhound racing

Greyt Exploitations

October 2018

[All-party Parliamentary Dog Advisory Welfare Group \(APDAWG\) – An Update on Greyhound Welfare](#)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

15 September 2016

[Welfare of racing greyhounds: post implementation review of the 2010 Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations](#)

House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

[Greyhound welfare Sub-committee Inquiry 2015-2016](#)

## 3 Parliamentary material

### 3.1 Debate

#### [Commons debate: Gambling Levy: Online Gambling and Greyhound Racing](#)

HC Deb 25 June 2019 | Vol 662: c259-

### 3.2 PQs

#### [Greyhounds: Animal Welfare](#)

##### **Asked by: Rosindell, Andrew**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the welfare of greyhounds that have finished their racing career.

##### **Answering member: Victoria Prentis | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

In January 2019 the Government announced an increased funding commitment from bookmakers to support the Greyhound Board of Great Britain's (GBGB) efforts to improve welfare. In 2019/20 the British Greyhound Racing Fund collected a total of £8.87m from bookmakers, up from £6.95m in the previous 12 months. The Government continues to encourage any remaining bookmakers that have not signed up to the voluntary arrangements to do so and welcomes the 22 March 2021 announcement by the Betting and Gaming Council that four more bookmakers have agreed to begin contributing to Fund. Working with the GBGB, each year the Fund contributes half its revenue to the welfare of racing greyhounds.

GBGB has committed to ensure that, wherever possible, every greyhound leaving GBGB racing should be rehomed. They have also introduced the Greyhound Retirement Scheme. The scheme attaches a £400 bond to each greyhound at the point of registration, paid for jointly by the owner and GBGB, in order to pay for rehoming costs at the end of a dog's racing life.

Once a greyhound's racing career is over, these dogs may be exported to Pakistan if the appropriate animal health and welfare certification requirements are met. We consider that completion of this process is sufficiently rigorous and costly to prevent the wide scale exportation of dogs from the UK. Since the beginning of 2019 we have only one record of an

application for a certificate to export a greyhound to Pakistan. However, we are unable to account for any movements to Pakistan that may have transited through a third country.

If we find evidence that there is a widespread problem, we can then consider what further steps may be necessary. GBGB is currently investigating whether any licensed GBGB member has knowingly supplied any greyhound directly to Pakistan.

**HC Deb 21 April 2021 | PQ 180433**

[Greyhounds: Animal Welfare](#)

**Asked by: Rosindell, Andrew**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage members of the betting industry to ensure the welfare of racing greyhounds.

**Answering member: Nigel Huddleston | Department: Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport**

The British Greyhound Racing Fund (BGRF) collects a voluntary levy from bookmakers and uses the funds for greyhound welfare and sports integrity, and to a lesser extent the development and promotion of the sport.

In January 2019 the Government announced an increased funding commitment from bookmakers to ensure the welfare of greyhounds is protected and improved. In 2019/20 the BGRF collected a total of £8.87m, up from £6.95m in the previous 12 months.

This commitment has allowed the BGRF to fund capital grants to stadia, for purposes including welfare and integrity support. In the last calendar year (2019), direct welfare provision totalled 51% of the British Greyhound Racing Fund's overall budget. BGRF support has also assisted GBGB to make emergency welfare payments to trainers, owners and the Greyhound Trust during Covid and to launch the Greyhound Retirement Scheme (GRS) in September.

Government will continue to work with the betting and greyhound industries to make sure that greyhound welfare is safeguarded and remains at the heart of the sport.

**HC Deb 07 October 2020 | PQ 96802**

[Greyhounds: Animal Welfare](#)

**Asked by: Rosindell, Andrew**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to undertake a review the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010.

**Answering member: Victoria Prentis | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

Defra undertook a Post Implementation Review of the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010 which was published on 15 September 2016. The review found that, judged against their original objectives, the regulations have been broadly effective. The review also identified areas where the industry themselves should be taking further action and Defra have been working closely with the main industry regulatory body, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, to ensure these actions are taken.

**HC Deb 03 March 2020 | PQ 20410**

### [Greyhound Racing: Animal Welfare](#)

**Asked by: Farrelly, Paul**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural affairs, what steps he is taking to improve welfare standards in greyhound racing.

**Answering member: David Rutley | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Government takes the welfare of all racing animals very seriously. We are working closely with the main racing greyhound industry regulatory body, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) to ensure it delivers on the commitments it made to the Government, following the Government's Post Implementation Review of the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010. This includes the annual publication of injury and retirement data to improve transparency in the sport. The second set of annual figures were published on 12 June 2019.

<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/gbgb-prod-assets/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/12085443/Final-2018-Stats.pdf>

The annual publication of the injury and retirement data was accompanied by an update on the progress made by the GBGB against their 'Greyhound Commitment'. The Commitment sets out an eight point manifesto on how the GBGB is aiming to improve the welfare of racing greyhounds, and includes a commitment to ensure more greyhounds are successfully rehomed at the end of their racing lives. The GBGB have also delivered an independent welfare standard for trainers' kennels and are also developing a UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) accredited trainers' licensing scheme for GBGB trainers. The Government is also considering whether further regulatory changes are required to protect the welfare of racing greyhounds used by professional trainers not running greyhounds on GBGB tracks.

To help ensure more funding for greyhound welfare, on 10 January 2019, the Government announced a new funding commitment from bookmakers worth an estimated additional £3 million this year to ensure the welfare of greyhounds is protected and improved. We expect thousands of racing greyhounds are to be better cared for as a result of this new deal. The commitment is set to increase the total amount of funding from bookmakers to the British Greyhound Racing Fund to an estimated £10 million this year.

**HC Deb 25 June 2019 | PQ 265461**

[Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010](#)

**Asked by: McCarthy, Kerry**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to review the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010.

**Answering member: David Rutley | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Government committed to reviewing the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010 after they had been in force for five years. The Government's Post Implementation Review of the Regulations was published on 15 September 2016 and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welfare-of-racing-greyhounds-post-implementation-review-of-the-2010-welfare-of-racing-greyhounds-regulations>

**HC Deb 11 June 2019 | PQ 259097**

## 4

# Groups and campaigns

End Greyhound Cruelty

<https://www.endgreyhoundcruelty.org.uk/>

CAGED Nationwide

<https://www.cagednw.co.uk/>

All-party Parliamentary Greyhound Group

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmllparty/220209/greyhound.htm>

Greyhound Trust

<https://www.greyhoundtrust.org.uk/>

All-party Parliamentary Dog Advisory Welfare Group (APDAWG)

<https://apdawg.co.uk/>

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