



The Greyhound Commitment

Annual Update
June 2020

A successful second year of the Greyhound Commitment

We are very pleased to be able to report again on the strong progress that has been made in meeting our Greyhound Commitment. Two years since our manifesto on welfare was launched, the eight points of the Commitment continue to be embraced across the industry. They are an integral part of our sport and, indeed, British greyhound racing would not be what it is today without the Commitment.

Greyhound welfare is very much at the heart of everything we do and it has been encouraging to see the many ways in which everyone across the sport puts the welfare of our canine athletes above all else. This is something that has been particularly evident this year when those working in the sport continued to put their greyhounds above their own interests and needs, despite the huge challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and Lockdown.

Having received a warm reception when it was launched in 2018, the Greyhound Commitment quickly became the blueprint for driving welfare standards across the sport. In our first year, we launched a number of important initiatives, such as the Injury Recovery Scheme and the Animal Care and Welfare Assistant Apprenticeship, and we continued our work with the Sports Turf Research Institute to identify additional ways of making racing surfaces as safe as possible. These measures, amongst others, proved to be very effective and we have continued to develop them this year.

As you will see, this past year has seen us further strengthen standards in a variety of ways. The Code of Practice for residential kennels, for example, was a watershed moment for our sport as, for the first time, we were able to provide trainers with a thorough, evidence-based guide to all aspects of greyhound care. Whilst the vast majority of trainers were already following the correct procedures, the publication of this Code means that anyone working at a residential kennels has access to the very best expertise and guidance on greyhound care. Likewise, this Code will ensure the highest levels of care across all our licensed trainers' kennels.

This year, we also announced that all residential kennels would now be externally audited as part of GBGB's own UKAS accreditation which had previously only covered the licensing of racecourses. The findings of these external inspections will now inform decisions on the issuing of trainers' licences from 2021 onwards. This accreditation is a clear signal of our unwavering commitment to upholding the very highest welfare standards for our greyhounds.

We want every trainer to thrive and flourish and, whilst we have zero tolerance of any mistreatment of dogs, we also seek to support trainers to provide the very best care to their greyhounds. To this end, this year we have provided over £370,780 in Trainer Assistance Fund grants helping over 85 trainers upgrade their kennel facilities, as well as £18,000 towards the cost of travel cages and air management systems for transporting greyhounds to and from the track.

Working towards our ambitious targets

As the injury and retirement data shows, we have made strong progress towards meeting the ambitious targets we set ourselves last year. We challenged ourselves to halve, within three years, the number of greyhounds being put to sleep on economic grounds or because no home was found. One year on, we have seen this figure fall by over 30% (from 180 to 123). This improvement is testament to the success of our Injury Recovery Scheme as well as the tireless efforts of those seeking suitable homes for retired greyhounds. We are clear, however, that these deaths are wholly unacceptable and we will continue to do whatever it takes to eradicate them entirely.

We also saw the number of greyhounds being put to sleep on humane grounds at the track due to injuries decrease by 14% from 242 to 207. The target we set last year was to halve this figure within three years and we will continue to work with the Sports Turf Research Institute to ensure our greyhounds race on the safest possible surfaces.

Safeguarding the welfare of greyhounds during the Lockdown

The COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent Lockdown presented a huge challenge for our sport. With trialling and racing suspended indefinitely, our trainers and owners faced serious financial difficulties and were very concerned that they would not be able to meet the basic needs of their greyhounds.

GBGB therefore took swift and direct action to help safeguard the welfare of all registered greyhounds. Within days of the Lockdown being put in place, we introduced Emergency Welfare Payments for trainers so they could meet the essential needs of all dogs in their kennels including racers, puppies and retirees. So far, we have paid out over £500,000 to trainers and have given a similar level of support to kennel branches of the Greyhound Trust. Many racecourses also provided their own contributions to attached trainers whilst the overwhelming majority of owners paid significant kennel fees despite their greyhounds not racing.

Our field force of stipendiary stewards went above and beyond throughout this period. As well as giving crucial advice on providing essential care and sufficient exercise to safeguard the greyhounds' physiological health and fitness, they worked with trainers to source alternative dog food suppliers and helped them access financial support from the government.

It was heartening to see everyone across the sport come together during this period of adversity with the shared aim of meeting the needs of our greyhounds. The racing greyhound community pulled together magnificently and it is testament to everyone's hard work and commitment that all 16,000 greyhounds housed within trainers' residential kennels were well-cared for during this difficult time. Our commitment to greyhound welfare has never been more apparent than over the past few months. To demonstrate this, social media was filled with heart-warming messages, photos and videos showcasing the care and attention greyhounds received throughout the crisis.

A safe return to racing

During the Lockdown period, we worked closely with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and our other key stakeholders to ensure a safe return to racing as soon as the government allowed. Throughout this planning phase, in partnership with racecourses and veterinary experts, we developed a comprehensive COVID-19 Operational Policy and our underlying priority was to always do whatever was in the best interests of our greyhounds, whilst keeping people safe and healthy. Careful consideration was given to how best to prepare greyhounds for a return to racing and our vets and stipendiary stewards worked closely with trainers to advise them on how to safely improve their greyhounds' fitness levels.

We are proud that greyhound racing was the first professional sport to return behind-closed-doors on 1st June. Our first month since returning has been both safe and successful. If this unprecedented situation has taught us anything, it is how committed everyone across the industry is to our greyhounds and how canine welfare will always come first, whatever the circumstances.

Looking ahead

Whilst we have achieved much this year, there is no room for complacency and we will continue to strive for the very best welfare standards across the sport. We have therefore reflected on the Commitment and identified additional ways of driving welfare standards over the next year. We are pleased to set out our revised Greyhound Commitment within this document.

Like every sport, the impact of the Lockdown period and ongoing social distancing measures are significant and, as you would expect, it will take time for us all to get back on track. To deal with the immediate crisis of COVID-19, we used funds earmarked for important welfare projects. This means that our much anticipated and much needed Greyhound Retirement Scheme (GRS), which will ensure there is funding available to meet the re-homing costs of every greyhound retiring from the sport, has sadly been delayed. The GRS will have a significant impact and, as such, we are determined to introduce it at the earliest opportunity but are mindful of the circumstances in which many of our trainers and owners now find themselves.

We would like to thank everyone across greyhound racing and our partners for supporting the Commitment. We are still focused on achieving the challenging targets we set ourselves last year and are confident that the initiatives already introduced and those planned for the next year will help us reach these targets and raise welfare standards even further.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Cooper
Chairman



Mark Bird
Managing Director



THE GREYHOUND COMMITMENT

1. Greyhound welfare and safety is at the heart of everything we do

We do this by:

- Having a zero-tolerance policy on the mistreatment of greyhounds;
- Having an evidence-based GBGB Policy for Racing in Weather Extremes;
- Enforcing a rigorous, independent disciplinary process with strong sanctions for any individual who is found to be in breach of the GBGB Rules of Racing;
- Having an independent Veterinary Surgeon present at all tracks to check the health and wellbeing of every greyhound both before and after racing;
- Having a dedicated Welfare Officer at all GBGB tracks;
- Promoting best practice in animal husbandry through professional development, advice and access to innovative research;
- Providing a thorough, evidence-based Code of Practice for residential kennels so that everyone working in a kennel has access to the latest advice and guidance on greyhound welfare;
- Providing funds for trainers to maintain and improve their facilities – in 2019 we awarded over £370,780 in Trainers' Assistance Grants as well as £18,000 towards the cost of travel cages and air management systems for transporting greyhounds to and from the track;
- Publishing annual, independently verified injury and retirement data for all GBGB registered greyhounds;
- Creating and sharing a series of 'how-to' videos giving trainers and owners useful and specialist advice and guidance in specific areas of greyhound care.

Building on this, we will:

- Arrange for all residential kennels to be externally audited to ensure they are upholding the very highest welfare standards;
- Review the role of Welfare Officers at our tracks to further safeguard welfare.

2. Every racing greyhound is treated with care and respect throughout its career

We do this by:

- Conducting a minimum of two unannounced visits by GBGB officials to residential greyhound kennels every year to confirm that welfare needs are being met;
- Ensuring greyhounds are cared for by licensed and competent staff during their careers;
- Licensing and inspecting stadia through government-approved, UKAS accredited methods;
- Using an online registry system to track all greyhounds racing on GBGB tracks, from registration to retirement;
- Providing a Welfare Hotline so that anyone concerned about the welfare of registered racing greyhounds can report information anonymously.

Building on this, we will:

- Publish an Owners' Charter setting out an owner's rights and responsibilities concerning the care of their greyhound;
- Introduce Owners' Contracts with trainers to safeguard the welfare of greyhounds.

3. Our independently verified injury rates remain the lowest in the world and will improve further still

We do this by:

- Having an independent Veterinary Surgeon at all GBGB tracks to check the health and wellbeing of every greyhound, both before and after racing, and to provide emergency care in the event that any greyhound needs it;
- Working with stadia to provide the safest possible racing surfaces;
- Working with STRI consultants to promote best practice in track preparation across all our stadia.

Building on this, we will:

- Continue to work towards our target of reducing the number of greyhounds being put to sleep on humane grounds at the track due to injuries;
- Organise training seminars for ground staff, provided by STRI, to extend the professional development opportunities available to them.

4. Wherever possible, every dog leaving racing enjoys a long and happy retirement

We do this by:

- Working in partnership with animal welfare charities to find suitable homes for greyhounds that have raced on GBGB licensed tracks and further promote their excellence as family pets. This includes investing substantially in greyhound homing schemes;
- Producing films promoting greyhounds as fantastic pets and sharing them on social media;
- Giving all greyhound owners access to our national Injury Recovery Scheme which provides financial support so that career-ending injuries need not be life-ending.

Building on this, we will:

- Continue to work towards achieving our mission of reducing the number of dogs being put to sleep on economic grounds or because no home was found to zero;
- Publish a new Greyhound Retirement Form which removes the option for dogs to be put to sleep for economic reasons;
- Work with our welfare charity partners to establish an assessment protocol for those dogs deemed unsuitable for homing. We are embarking on a collaborative working project with Dogs Trust to explore ways of better preparing greyhounds to join their forever homes;
- Introduce a Greyhound Retirement Scheme that attaches a financial bond to each greyhound at the point of registration, paid for jointly by the owner, tracks and GBGB, in order to meet costs associated with its homing at the end of its racing career.



5. Every race is run fairly, safely and that attending a race meeting is an enjoyable and fun experience for all involved

We do this by:

- Using our regulatory powers to ensure that all involved in GBGB licensed stadia follow the Rules of Racing, and to enforce a rigorous, independent disciplinary process – with appropriate sanctions – where the Rules are breached;
- Having a robust anti-doping strategy - more than 8,000 samples were taken between 1 October 2018 and 30 September 2019. These were independently tested by LGC, a world-renowned forensic laboratory, as part of our work to prevent and handle any threats to the integrity of our sport and to protect the welfare of licensed racing greyhounds. Only a tiny proportion of these (0.19%) were found to be directly related to doping;
- Working closely with the Gambling Commission to safeguard the integrity of the sport;
- Facilitating collaboration amongst the RCPA tracks to help them reach out to new audiences;
- Being an inclusive sport, welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds either as spectators or as industry professionals.

Building on this, we will:

- Work with stadia to broaden their appeal to new audiences;
- Explore more avenues for showcasing greyhound racing following the increase in online content during the Lockdown period;
- Continue to be at the forefront of scientific innovations so that our anti-doping systems remain robust and effective.

6. Those working within the sport have access to training at the beginning of their careers, and ongoing, accredited professional development

We do this by:

- Funding research into the health and welfare of greyhounds that further educates those working within our sport and improves standards;
- Providing those working within our sport access to a library of up-to-date, innovative research on best practice;
- Holding an Annual Vets Conference and organising an informal vets' network;
- Providing training for track preparation and grounds staff at GBGB licensed stadia;
- Offering an Animal Care and Welfare Assistant Apprenticeship which provides hands-on training in delivering world-class care to racing greyhounds.

Building on this, we will:

- Provide ongoing professional development for vets;
- Hold further training sessions for greyhound trainers on injury detection and the latest veterinary research;
- Explore the possibility of an Apprenticeship scheme for ground staff.

7. Funding received from the betting industry significantly contributes to greyhound welfare

We do this by:

- Directing at least 75% of the funding received from the betting industry to animal welfare;
- Working with government to maximise income from the betting industry.

Building on this, we will:

- Seek to secure future funding to allow a fuller and more sustainable roll-out of the Injury Recovery Scheme, which has the potential to put an end to dogs being put to sleep for financial reasons. This funding would also assist the Greyhound Retirement Scheme which will attach a financial bond to each greyhound at the point of registration;
- Continue to work with the bookmaking industry so that their concern and priority for welfare translates into the funding that we all know our sport needs.

8. Together, we continue to promote our sport and nurture the public's love of greyhounds

We do this by:

- Educating the public about greyhound racing and promoting greyhounds as a proud and historic breed;
- Publishing videos to promote the sport and retired greyhounds;
- Promoting the considerable economic contribution of our sport, in employing over 7,000 people and remaining one of the most attended sports in the UK;
- Facilitating the Greyhound Ambassador Scheme to actively support and promote both racing and the successful retirement of greyhounds.

Building on this, we will:

- Expand the Greyhound Ambassadors Scheme so that they can further their work;
- Support tracks in their outreach and charitable activities and in welcoming new audiences;
- Continue to produce and promote content that showcases the value of the sport and the enjoyment it brings to our greyhounds and our people;
- Recruit a Commercial Director to explore new partnerships and widen our audience base.



How we met the Commitment this year

Continuing the Injury Recovery Scheme

Now in its second year, our Injury Recovery Scheme (IRS) continues to provide much-needed funding towards the corrective veterinary treatment of orthopaedic injuries sustained at GBGB licenced racecourses. The scheme seeks to ensure that career-ending injuries are not life-ending and that greyhounds are able to go on to enjoy a long, healthy and happy retirement.

Since its launch in October 2018, there have been over 400 successful applications to the IRS from across our tracks, with the scheme helping to lessen the burden of veterinary bills at what is a hugely difficult time for trainers and owners.

Commenting on the scheme, Katie O'Flaherty, a greyhound trainer attached to Crayford Stadium, said:

"For me as a trainer, the process of going through the scheme was very simple. I picked up an IRS assistance funding form from my track, filled it out and then emailed it to the GBGB, along with other necessary documents. It didn't take long for a cheque to come in the post!

"Whilst the care my greyhounds received would've been exactly the same without help from the IRS, having this support from GBGB definitely made the veterinary bills more manageable. It really shows how much the GBGB care about greyhound welfare and has been a godsend for owners and trainers across our sport.

"All of my greyhounds that have used the scheme have recovered well from their injuries and either found wonderful forever homes or are in the process via rehoming kennels."

Demonstrating the Gold Standard in Care at Residential Kennels

To signal our ambition to provide the very best greyhound care, in February of this year we announced that all residential kennels would be externally audited to check that they are upholding the highest welfare standards.

From January 2021 all greyhound residential kennels will be subject to an independent inspection from NSF International and the outcome of these inspections will form part of GBGB's own UKAS accreditation, which previously had only covered the licensing of racecourses. The findings of these independent inspections will also be shared with GBGB to inform decisions on the issuing of trainer licences for 2021 onwards.

To assist trainers in preparing for these new inspections, GBGB launched a new Code of Practice – a comprehensive manual covering all aspects of caring for a greyhound's mental and physical health. It includes recommendations on the construction, maintenance and management of kennels as well as guidelines on environmental enrichment, exercise, nutrition and dental care.

The Code of Practice was produced in consultation with trainers, veterinary professionals and animal welfare partners and seeks to be a helpful and practical tool.

Welcoming the new Code of Practice, Peter Harnden, GBGB Trainers' Representative, said:

"The new Code of Practice gives clear guidelines on what is expected of all trainers and will make sure that standards across our sport are brought up to those of the best. Trainers will be familiar with a lot of the guidance contained within it but having all the information in one place is really helpful for us all. It means that every member of kennel staff, whatever their experience level, is working from the same guidelines."

Mark Bird added:

"Our new inspection and accreditation procedures, as well as the launch of the Code of Practice, signal a step change in welfare standards in our sport. By including residential kennels in our UKAS accreditation, we are demonstrating to everyone – both within and outside the sport – our unwavering commitment to upholding the very highest welfare standards for our greyhounds."

"Through the Code of Practice, we are now providing a thorough, evidence-based guide to all these aspects of greyhound care and a clear framework for everyone to follow. It will become the definitive reference document for trainers and kennel staff to use for their day-to-day operations. Along with the new inspections, it will mean that we can ensure all GBGB registered greyhounds receive the best treatment, both at the track and at home in their trainers' kennels."

