

DELIVERING 'A GOOD LIFE FOR EVERY GREYHOUND'

Progress Report: February 2024



In May 2022, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) launched its long-term welfare strategy to further promote and protect welfare across all stages of a racing greyhound's life. Led by Professor Madeleine Campbell FRCVS, GBGB developed 'A Good Life for Every Greyhound' which set out the improvements needed to safeguard a greyhound's wellbeing across the Five Domains of Animal Welfare: nutrition, behaviour, health, environment and mental state.

This document sets out the progress we have achieved to date and encouragingly shows that all of the short-term objectives contained within the Strategy have either been delivered or are being delivered on an ongoing basis.

The Strategy is underpinned by the key theme of shared responsibility and the progress achieved so far would not have been possible without the commitment and hard work of everyone across licensed greyhound racing as well as our many partners including charities (members of the Greyhound Forum), academics and veterinary surgeons. This collaborative commitment has allowed us to deliver positive impacts on welfare across all stages of a greyhound's life and the Five Domains of Animal Welfare.

We look forward to continuing to work with all our stakeholders as we move ahead with the remaining components of the Strategy.



Education

In partnership with external experts, we have created a high-quality and relevant education programme for all stakeholders which is delivered through a mixture of in-person, practical training and webinar-based sessions. Programmes include:

- Training in emergency veterinary medicine for trackside vets delivered in conjunction with the University of Nottingham;
- A Nutrition Workshop for greyhound trainers run by Dr Teresa Hollands;
- A series of regular interactive webinars for stakeholders responsible for track maintenance provided in conjunction with the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI);
- A webinar for trainers on kennel sickness delivered by Dr Richard Payne;
- A webinar on the responsibilities of owning a racing greyhound provided by GBGB Owners' Practitioner Director Ian Foster;
- A regular programme of Continuous Professional Development for GBGB Stipendiary Stewards and Regional Regulatory Vets.

Upcoming stakeholder webinars include a session for trainers and breeders on canine fertility, reproduction and whelping (with international expert Professor Gary England FRCVS) and a session for owners of retired greyhounds on caring for a senior greyhound (from GBGB Regional Regulatory Vet, Dr Victoria Fraser).

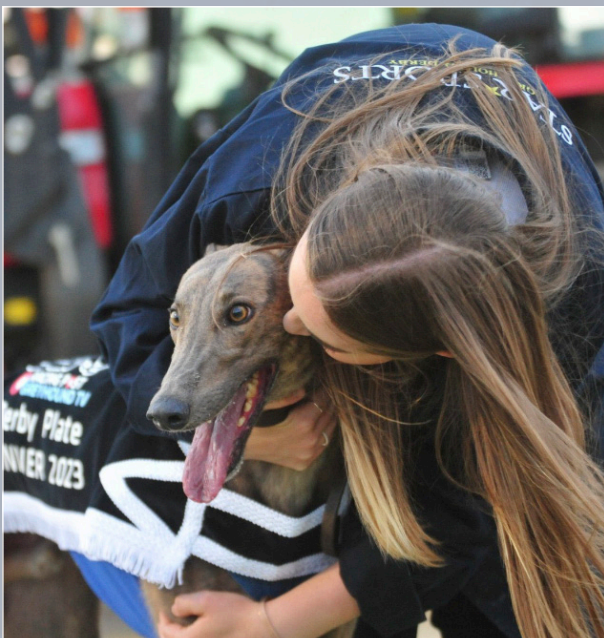
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International collaboration

GBGB has been delighted to work with international regulatory colleagues to increase information exchange and share best practice. In 2023, we hosted the first welfare meeting of international regulatory colleagues, which was attended by regulators from both hemispheres with representatives from Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland.

The agenda focused on the shared priorities, challenges and opportunities facing regulators in delivering the highest standards of greyhound welfare. Discussions explored examples of systems, policies and initiatives which are helping to improve standards further, by harnessing new and emerging technology and cutting-edge research. This includes areas such as traceability, reduction in injuries, homing, education and professional development.

GBGB is looking forward to continuing to collaborate internationally on greyhound welfare, starting with an in-person meeting with regulators from Australia and New Zealand in March 2024.



Evidence and the ongoing need for research

GBGB believes that policy-making ought to be evidence-based and research is, therefore a significant theme within the Welfare Strategy. Since the Strategy was launched, two projects in conjunction with the Royal Veterinary College have been undertaken and completed. One looked at decision-making around trackside euthanasia and one at factors which impact a greyhound's chance of being successfully homed at the point of retirement. Both pieces of work have informed the development of GBGB policies – and particularly the work which GBGB has commissioned Dr Sarah Heath MRCVS to undertake around greyhound behaviour (see below).

At Nottingham University, two MRes projects are underway. One is looking at the causes of injury in racing greyhounds and the other at how modern technologies can be used to detect sub-clinical injuries and thereby reduce the chance of them becoming catastrophic injuries. The latter project involves adapting technologies such as computerised gait analysis and ultrasound imaging, which are already being used to detect sub-clinical injuries in horses, for use in greyhounds.

Meanwhile, GBGB is collaborating with PlusVital and Professor Emmeline Hill, an internationally recognised expert in racehorse genetics, to research greyhound genetics and possible correlations with predisposition to injury. Data collection is currently underway with the aim of better understanding the genetic basis of resilience and thus enabling breeders to make decisions which select for long-lasting health and soundness.

In veterinary, as in human, medicine, we increasingly understand that nutrition has significant impacts on both physical and psychological health. This is particularly true

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for athletes, and yet feeding regimes for greyhounds have historically been based on tradition rather than science. Trainers from across GBGB are currently assisting Dr Teresa Hollands with research into greyhound nutrition, to inform evidence-based recommendations about optimal nutrition for a racing greyhound at each stage of its life.

None of this wide range of welfare-focused research would be happening without the collaboration of academic experts, support from the industry, and buy-in from greyhound owners, trainers and breeders. GBGB is grateful to them all for their contributions to our research programme.

Monitoring of welfare

Within the Strategy, GBGB undertook to develop a system of welfare monitoring which would facilitate shared responsibility for greyhound welfare, promote proactive consideration of negative and positive welfare impacts by those responsible for greyhound welfare and increase knowledge-sharing and data collection.

Across the short-term strategy period, Professor Sarah Wolfensohn and her team have been working alongside GBGB to design and pilot a bespoke greyhound version of her internationally recognised, validated welfare tool the 'Animal Welfare Assessment Grid' (AWAG). The greyhound

AWAG is currently being refined following pilot trials, before being rolled out for wider use. GBGB would like to thank not only our research collaborators but also the GBGB-licensed trainers who have been involved in the pilot trial and provided invaluable feedback.

Traceability

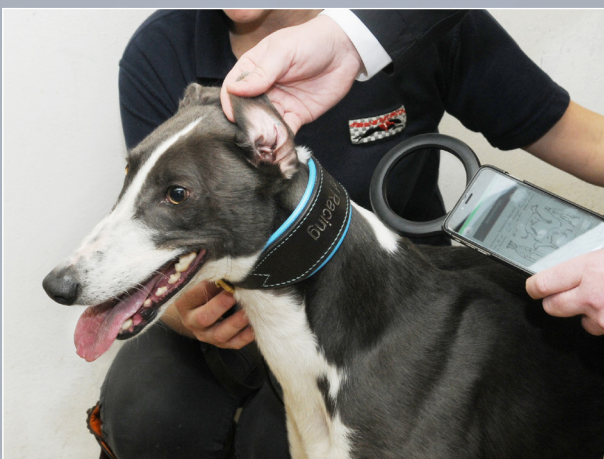
Traceability is a theme which runs throughout the Strategy and provides an excellent example of how research and international collaboration align to optimise greyhound welfare. Being able to trace individual dogs is a prerequisite for safeguarding the welfare of all dogs and for greyhounds there is an added dimension relating to racing integrity.

For decades, the key methods of identification have been ear-tattooing combined with microchipping. Ear tattooing has obvious welfare disadvantages and is somewhat unreliable. Having learnt from international experience, GBGB, during the short-term period of the Welfare Strategy, has been working with an industry partner to develop a bespoke method of greyhound identification which uses artificial intelligence to recognise the unique pattern of a dog's nose. This non-invasive method of recognising and therefore tracing greyhounds is currently in the early pilot trial period and showing promising results.

Early years

Some may recall that when the Strategy was launched, the GBGB Board took a unanimous view that it is our moral obligation to share responsibility for welfare across a greyhound's lifetime – even though our regulatory remit only covers the racing phase of their life. The short-term strategy period has accordingly been a busy one for our 'early years' programme.

Welfare around puppy breeding is currently a matter of public concern in the canine world



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generally. With input from the Registrar of the Greyhound Studbook and greyhound breeders and linked to the theme of traceability above, we are undertaking an ongoing audit of breeders and have communicated with stakeholders to remind them of their legal responsibilities. We have also, with input from our Greyhound Forum partner, the Kennel Club, progressed with the development of a bespoke racing greyhound 'early years scheme' which is currently being completed before review by a selection of greyhound breeders and rearers. As we develop this work, we will continue to work with British breeders to understand how GBGB can best support them.

Racing years

Some major initiatives relating to the racing years of a greyhound's life have been delivered within the short-term strategy period. Of note is achieving UKAS accreditation for the inspection of residential (as distinct from racetrack) kennels. Conditions within residential kennels is an area about which canine charities have historically flagged concerns. Across the short-term strategy period, we have therefore been working to refine specified standards against which independent inspections have been taking place.

Achieving UKAS accreditation for this process means there is external oversight of a system

within which all GBGB licensed trainers must have their kennels independently audited each calendar year by external auditors SCL, to ensure compliance with PAS 251: 2017. Any trainer who does not meet the required standards during their audit must make rectifications within a specified time frame. If they do not make the necessary corrections, their residential kennel certification and GBGB licence is suspended. Additionally, all trainers receive separate visits to residential kennels during the year from GBGB Stipendiary Stewards and GBGB Regional Regulatory Vets.

GBGB recognises that the causes of injury are multifactorial – hence the emphasis in the Welfare Strategy on research across health, genetics, nutrition and management. Track conditions are only one piece of that multifactorial picture but an important piece. At the very beginning of 2024, GBGB published its 'Track Maintenance Guide'. This substantial, world-leading resource was developed through a collaboration between Dr Christian Spring, Group Principal Scientist for STRI, GBGB's Track Liaison Officer, Mr Mark Peacock and the GBGB Track sub-committee chaired by Mr Bill Glass.



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The Track Maintenance Guide will provide an invaluable continuing education and reference resource for all racecourse stakeholders. Importantly, it not only provides clear guidance on all stages of the track maintenance process – construction and layout, infrastructure, preparation and troubleshooting – but also provides information on where stakeholders can seek expert help and emphasises the need for an evidence-based, scientifically informed and flexible, proactive approach. To complement the development of the Track Maintenance Guide, GBGB is delivering an ongoing series of webinars for relevant stakeholders.

Within the short-term strategy framework, GBGB has doubled the number of independent inspections of licensed tracks by STRI. In 2024, this will be doubled again so that every licensed track receives four independent inspections a year. This will enable independent experts to assess each track and make recommendations under the full range of seasonal variations. As an example of the impact of this work, following research and discussions with GBGB and STRI, one stadium – Central Park – received a £500,000 investment from the Arena Racing Company (ARC) to improve its track racing surface.



For racing owners, GBGB has produced a welcome booklet highlighting their responsibilities towards greyhound welfare and signposting them to further information and resources. Importantly, it details their responsibility around ensuring their greyhound is found a suitable home upon retirement.

Retirement years

The short-term period of the Strategy coincided with a significant cost-of-living crisis in the UK which has had a negative impact on rehoming across the canine sector. GBGB is not immune to this and we have been working hard with our Greyhound Forum colleagues to learn from the experience of their charities so that we continue to do everything we can to ensure that, wherever possible, every greyhound has a long, happy and healthy retirement.



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Since the launch of the Welfare Strategy, 15 new centres have joined GBGB's Greyhound Retirement Scheme, bringing our total number of approved homing centres to 103. Since 2022, GBGB has also supported over 463 British-bred greyhounds by paying half of the 'GRS bond' which all owners are required to pay when their greyhound enters racing.

Research undertaken in collaboration with the Royal Veterinary College, which is currently under peer review for publication, elucidated particular challenges greyhounds may face around homing. GBGB is delighted to be collaborating with internationally-renowned veterinary behaviourist Dr Sarah Heath in a programme to address some of these issues. It is known that a greyhound's ability to adapt successfully to a domestic environment at the time of retirement is a product of the cumulative

lifetime experiences of that greyhound since it was a puppy. Based on fieldwork currently being undertaken, Dr Heath will be delivering a series of educational sessions for breeders, owners and trainers about what they can do in the early years of a greyhound's life to make that retirement transition easier. Dr Heath is also designing a standardised behavioural assessment for greyhounds which can be used by homing centres and will allow those responsible for the homing of greyhounds to accurately identify those dogs who are going to find the transition to a domestic environment particularly challenging and arrange bespoke help for them.

Similar to the welcome booklet for racing owners, GBGB will shortly be publishing a new information pack for owners of retired greyhounds. Developed with input from the Greyhound Forum, the pack seeks to provide new owners with relevant and useful information on all aspects of caring for their greyhound.

Further information

Keep up-to-date with our latest initiatives by following us

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Get in touch at

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