

Greyhound Racing (Offences) (Scotland) Bill

October 2025

Name of Organisation

Scottish Countryside Alliance

Information about your organisation

The Scottish Countryside Alliance is the political campaigning force that promotes and protects the rural way of life, representing the interests of our members, supporters and rural communities in parliament, in the media and on the ground.

Question 1 - The Bill (section 1) would make it an offence for a person who owns or is responsible for a greyhound, to race that greyhound on an oval racetrack or knowingly permit another person to race that greyhound.

Please select one item

Yes **No** Don't know

Please use the text below to provide reasons for your answer

We do not agree that greyhound racing on oval tracks should be banned. The bill does not take into consideration the overall welfare of the dogs over their lifetime.

There is only one hobbyist track currently operating in Scotland, so for this Bill to be given valuable airtime being debated by committees and parliamentarians, we feel that more important issues should take precedence at this time. This bill is wholly disproportionate for this reason and will be a wasteful use of public funds.

Legislating appropriately for greyhound racing in Scotland should be seriously considered, rather than a complete ban. This was in fact the opinion of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee when this bill was last discussed, stating in May 2024 that it did not believe a ban on greyhound racing was a “proportionate and a fair response” to welfare concerns. Proper regulations and licensing for this activity should be sought, similar to the welfare standards outlined by the GBGB.

Banning greyhound racing may result in it being pushed underground and with any unregulated activities, this would result in poorer welfare outcomes for the dogs. Regulated greyhound racing activities under the registration of the GBGB would ensure correct veterinary advice, track operation and welfare of the dogs throughout their lifetime. GBGB operate a rehoming programme for dogs once they retire, and so they are committed to giving the dogs a good quality of life all the way into and throughout their retirement.

In Scotland, all dogs, including greyhounds, are covered by the general protections of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. A statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of

Dogs also applies to all dogs in Scotland as part of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. Greyhounds are also subject to a number of other pieces of legislation, including:

- Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Scotland) Regulations 2006.
- Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations, 2016.
- Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021.

It is surprising, given the extent of the claims of poor welfare made by those opposed to greyhound racing that they do not appear to have used any of the existing laws against those who fail to ensure the welfare of their dogs.

Will this bill to ban racing greyhounds on oval tracks lead onto consideration of other forms of activities where animals are used, such as sheepdog and working dog trials, agility training as can be seen annually at Crufts, CaniCross and flyball. Will the SAWC and the Scottish Government then turn their attention to horse racing and try to ban this? The bill from Scottish Greens MSP Mark Ruskell is very heavy-handed and disproportionate, leading us to question why the current Scottish government supports this bill.

Question 2 - The Bill (section 2) would also make it illegal for someone who owns or is responsible for an oval racetrack, to allow people to race greyhounds on that racetrack.

Please select one item

Yes **No** Don't know

Please use the textbox below to provide reasons for your answer

The reasons for injuries to racing greyhounds are multifactorial and cannot be attributed singularly to the shape of a track. Consideration must be given to current statistics on racing greyhounds, as follows (GBGB figures):

- In 2024, the track fatality rate was 0.03% – half what it was in 2020.
- In 2024, the track injury rate was 1.07% – down from 1.23% in 2021.
- In 2024 the fatality rate in British horseracing (including flat and jump racing) was 0.25% according to the BHA. This figure is over 8 times higher than greyhound racing.

Other injury factors can include dog breeding and genetics, track surface, diet and exercise, recovery time between races, and gender of the dog. It is very simplistic to say that oval tracks are the major cause of injury to greyhounds.

It is also worth noting that for those who do race greyhounds, it is in their interests to ensure dogs are as well cared for and as fit as possible to reduce the risks of injury during racing.

Question 3 - The Bill defines 'racetrack' as one that is oval in shape, but it allows the Scottish Government to amend this through secondary legislation so that racing could be banned on other types of tracks in the future.

Please select one item

Yes **No** Don't know

Please use the textbox below to provide reasons for your answer

We do not support the proposed clause within the Bill which would define 'racetrack' as one that is oval in shape but allow the Scottish Government to amend this through secondary legislation so that racing could be banned on other types of tracks in the future. We have outlined our reasons for this in Question 1 and 2. Only regulation and licensing would be the best plan of action for greyhound racing in Scotland, rather than a complete ban.

Question 4 - Is there anything missing from the Bill that you expected or wanted to see included?

Please provide your response in the box provided.

See questions 1 and 2. We believe that this bill should not be supported by the Scottish Government, and instead we strongly support the regulation and licensing of greyhound racing in Scotland.

Question 5 - Do you have any other comments on the Bill?

Please provide your response in the box provided.

We believe that this bill will not achieve what it sets out to do. Banning races on oval tracks will only push this activity underground whereby unregulated racing will occur to the detriment of the animals this bill sets out to protect. Underground racing will put the dogs out of the protective reach of trusted organisations, such as GBGB.

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission's (SAWC) report on the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland points out: the pursuit phase of the race is associated with positive emotional states in dogs, and many dogs engage in chase and pursuit of moving objects suggesting it is a highly motivated behaviour for dogs. They also noted that the anticipation shown by greyhounds before a race suggests "that greyhounds do enjoy running and chasing 'prey' (the lure)". Simply to ban the activity in Scotland not only prevents activities where there are positive welfare benefits for greyhounds, recognising that risk of injury should always be minimised, but in doing so is actually detrimental to welfare. We do not ban sporting activities because a person risks injury, we ensure that the activity is undertaken to minimise risk of harm, recognising a balance is struck between risk and benefit to the individual.

Given that the Bill will effectively end a viable business and interferes with a contractual arrangement and future earnings without any compensation it would seem to infringe rights under the ECHR, in particular Article 1 (Protocol 1). The Bill amounts to a deprivation and not a control of property rights. It goes beyond what is necessary to achieve a legitimate objective (animal welfare) and is therefore a disproportionate interference. It is our understanding that legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament must be compatible with Convention rights. The Scotland Act 1998 explicitly states that legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament is outside its legislative competence if it is incompatible with ECHR rights. Any interference with ECHR protected rights must be the minimum necessary to achieve a legitimate objective. Having reviewed the evidence and the options between status quo, statutory regulation and a ban, we do not believe a ban can be justified but there is a strong case for regulation.

Unnecessary pressure from animal charities and welfare organisations, with support from the Scottish Green Party needs to be tempered for future legislation involved in animal welfare. It is therefore essential that this bill be given balanced and careful consideration to prevent it from leading to future bans on other activities involving animals, such as those outlined in question 1.