



Mr Finlay Carson MSP
Convener, Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

27th September 2022

Dear Mr Carson,

Welfare of racing greyhounds

As the Convener of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee, we are writing to you about a recent change in our policy on racing greyhounds.

Dogs Trust, the RSPCA and Blue Cross have recently conducted internal policy reviews on the welfare of racing greyhounds. As a result of these reviews, we are calling for greyhound racing to come to a phased end to put a stop to the unnecessary and completely preventable deaths of hundreds of dogs every year.

As part of the Greyhound Forum, which comprises animal welfare organisations and industry bodies working together to improve racing greyhound welfare, we have been working with the greyhound racing industry for many years to try to improve conditions for the dogs involved in the sport. While this has led to some improvements to the welfare of the dogs, the three charities believe there are still significant welfare issues for racing greyhounds which have not been resolved and we are unconvinced that the current approach to regulating and funding the sport will resolve these serious welfare concerns.

Following extensive reviews by each organisation, we have identified significant issues associated with the industry which detrimentally affect welfare. These include:

- Serious challenges for greyhound physical and mental health at all stages of their racing career. For example, some of the dogs used in racing are kept in poor, barren conditions, with little if any enrichment and fed a poor diet.
- Greyhound racing is inherently dangerous for the dogs involved. Running at speed around oval tracks causes significant injury to many dogs, and in some cases the injuries are so severe that it is necessary to euthanise the dog. The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) is the self-regulating organisation that governs licensed greyhound racing in Great Britain. Data from GBGB show that over 2,000 greyhounds died and nearly 18,000 dogs were injured from greyhound racing between 2018 and 2021, with additional dogs injured on independent tracks.
- The absence of a sustainable and consistent source of income which has grossly impacted any meaningful change. However, not only does the industry need considerable finances to continue as is, a complete overhaul is necessary so that the sport is compatible with good welfare.
- Disjointed and ineffective regulation within the sector and across the different nations within

which racing takes place

- A lack of transparency regarding industry practices and enforcement of regulatory standards, including records of racetrack injuries to greyhounds and checks for banned substances.

Based on our reviews, we now believe it is time to call for an end to greyhound racing. We are specifically calling for a phased approach rather than an immediate ban so that we can carefully plan and coordinate the care of the many dogs who will be affected. We expect that this will be feasible within five years.

Our change in policy is with immediate effect. We have debated long and hard, weighed up pros and cons, listened to and been driven by evidence. We all feel that the phasing out of greyhound racing is the only way to safeguard greyhound welfare but we remain committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure every dog has a good life.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Burghes, CEO, Blue Cross Owen Sharp, CEO, Dogs Trust Chris Sherwood, CEO, RSPCA