

Scottish SPCA submission relating to petition PE1758: End greyhound racing in Scotland

As Scotland's animal welfare charity, we have a duty to ensure that animals are provided with a life worth living and are not being exploited for human gain or profit.

Greyhound racing was once a thriving industry in Scotland with over 30 locations where greyhound races were held. Cultural changes and shifts in public attitude towards animals are factors that have contributed to there being only two tracks left in Scotland. These are the regulated Shawfield Stadium and Thornton which is an unlicensed 'flapper' track.

The Scottish SPCA recognises the welfare issues associated with greyhound racing. The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) reported that from 2017 to 2020, 197 injuries were reported at Shawfield with 15 deaths. This is 15 deaths too many. We have no doubt that number would be higher if the pandemic hadn't forced the temporary closure of the stadium.

There is no similar record at Thornton, where the risk to greyhounds is higher due to there being no governing body to ensure animal welfare standards are being upheld. The possibility of injury or death at Thornton is presumed to be higher due to the lack of veterinary support on-site and dogs not being tested for illegal substances in their systems. There is also an increased risk to greyhounds due to the likelihood of ex-registered track racers being sold on to be raced at Thornton. These dogs will be more prone to injury due to age or health issues associated with a career in racing.

The Scottish SPCA has investigated a number of greyhound trainers in relation to administering illegal substances to greyhounds. These include illegal veterinary medicines and performance enhancing drugs such as steroids and caffeine based substances. Unfortunately, due to issues around the testing of the substances at the time, the Procurator Fiscal was not able to take the cases forward.

Concerns have been raised around what would happen to greyhounds involved in the industry if a ban is introduced. The Scottish SPCA would take dogs in to our care and work with partners to ensure ex-racers are cared for and subsequently rehomed.

The Scottish SPCA also recognises that considerations need to be made to stop greyhounds being bred if greyhound racing was prohibited. The Society will care for any stud, breeding female, pregnant mum or mum and suckling pups until they are ready to be rehomed. Any dog rehomed by the Scottish SPCA is neutered or spayed to ensure they cannot be used for breeding in the future.

Scotland needs to lead the way in the UK and put the welfare of racing greyhounds first by implementing a full ban on this outdated industry.

Kind regards,

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Scottish SPCA chief superintendent

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