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# Greyhound Racing (Offences) (Scotland) Bill

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The Greyhound Racing (Offences) (Scotland) Bill was introduced by Mark Ruskell MSP on 23 April 2025. It aims to improve and protect the welfare of greyhounds in Scotland by introducing certain offences, prohibiting greyhound racing on any oval racetrack in Scotland.



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# Summary and key documents

The [Greyhound Racing \(Offences\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 23 April 2025.

It is a Member's Bill and was introduced by Mark Ruskell MSP ('the Member in Charge of the Bill'). Information about Member's Bills, including how they are introduced and progress through the Scottish Parliament, [is set out on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

Accompanying documents published alongside the Bill include:

- [A Policy Memorandum](#)
- [Explanatory Notes](#)
- [A Financial Memorandum](#)
- [A Delegated Powers Memorandum](#)

As a Member's Bill, the Bill and supporting documents were prepared by the Scottish Parliament's Non-Government Bills Unit (NGBU) on behalf of the Member in Charge of the Bill.

The lead Committee for this Bill is the Rural Affairs and Islands (RAI) Committee. The RAI Committee [issued a targeted Call for Views on the Bill which closed on 10 October 2025, and has published the responses](#).

Key aspects of the Bill:

- **Policy objectives of the Bill:** The Policy Memorandum sets out that the Bill aims to improve and protect the welfare of greyhounds in Scotland, and that Mark Ruskell MSP "considers that there is an inherent, evidence-based, risk of injury or fatality of greyhounds involved in racing" and that "existing animal welfare measures have not sufficiently protected racing greyhounds from harm".
- The Bill **seeks to effectively ban greyhound racing** in Scotland by making it an offence for:
  - A person who owns or is responsible for a greyhound, to "knowingly cause" that greyhound to run on a racetrack or "knowingly permit" another person to do so.
  - A person who owns or is responsible for the operation of a racetrack, to "knowingly cause or permit" another person to cause a greyhound to run on that racetrack.
- The offences apply to any racetrack used for the purpose of racing greyhounds that is **oval in shape**, with powers for Scottish Ministers to, by regulations, modify the definition of "racetrack" to modify the ban to include "other categories of premises used for the purpose of the competing of running greyhounds". The Policy Memorandum sets out this is because evidence shows the risks of injuries and fatalities in racing are strongly linked to the typical oval track design.
- The offences apply regardless of **whether or not a track is licensed** by the

Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) or another authority, and regardless of whether or not the racing took part as commercial or non-commercial activity e.g. for training or time-trials.

- **Maximum penalties** if convicted of an offence under the Bill are: on summary conviction, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding £20,000 (or both), or on conviction on indictment, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or a fine (or both).
- The Bill makes provision for **enforcement, and for 'deprivation orders', 'disqualification orders', and 'seizure orders'** in relation to greyhounds - whereby for example courts may order for the removal of greyhounds from a person's care, or disqualify a person from owning a greyhound following conviction of a relevant offence.

# Background

## Greyhound racing in Scotland and the rest of the UK

### Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) tracks and independent or 'flapper' tracks

Greyhound racing in Great Britain can take place either in tracks registered by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) - the industry body for greyhound racing in England, Wales and Scotland (information on Northern Ireland is set out further below), or at independent tracks, sometimes also known as 'flapper tracks'. At the time of writing, [there are 19 GBGB registered greyhound racetracks in Great Britain](#) (18 in England and 1 in Wales), and none in Scotland.

GBGB tracks and registered trainers operate under [GBGB's 'Rules of Racing'](#), which set out a range of policies and standards including on veterinary presence at tracks, and a [Code of Practice](#) for the management of residential greyhound kennels. GBGB also [publishes injury and retirement data](#), and published an animal welfare strategy, [A Good Life for Every Greyhound](#), in 2022.

### Extent of racing activity in Scotland

The most recent racetrack to operate in Scotland is [Thornton Greyhound Stadium in Fife](#), also thought to be the only remaining independent track in Great Britain. Thornton is not GBGB-licensed and there is no requirement for it to be licensed by any other body.

Whilst [racing took place earlier in 2025](#), the Thornton Racetrack website [states that there is currently no racing taking place](#). It is unclear if this applies to all racing activity e.g. "trials" (for timing purposes) and training use.

A GBGB-racetrack at Shawfield in Rutherglen (South Lanarkshire) ceased operating in 2020 reportedly related to the Covid pandemic. Plans to demolish and redevelop the site [have been reported in the media](#) indicating it is unlikely to re-open.

Another 'flapper' track operating in recent years in Scotland was the Armadale track in West Lothian, [which reportedly ceased racing in 2016](#). Reportedly, [there were once 20 tracks operating in Scotland](#), which have gradually closed during the late 20th century.

The Policy Memorandum for the Bill states that "it is understood that there are 27 GBGB-registered greyhound breeders and trainers in Scotland". This means that the breeders or trainers are located in and kennel greyhounds in Scotland but travel to race their greyhounds at GBGB tracks in England or Wales. Registered trainers are listed, by location, [on the GBGB website](#).

### Regulation of greyhound racing in Scotland

There are no specific regulations in Scotland which apply to greyhound racing or where racing greyhounds are kennelled. There is no requirement for greyhound tracks or kennels (for racing dogs) to be licensed by the local authority or another public body.

As with all 'protected animals', the general, overarching animal welfare protections set out

in the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 (the '2006 Act') apply to greyhounds. For example, [it is an offence to cause any protected animal 'unnecessary suffering'](#).

Scottish Ministers have powers ([under section 37 of the 2006 Act](#)) to issue statutory codes of practice for the purpose of providing practical guidance in respect of complying with the 2006 Act. Whilst there is no specific guidance for greyhound racing, there is [a Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs](#) (published 2010) which intends to promote good practice in caring for dogs.

Scottish Ministers also have powers ([section 27 of the 2006 Act](#)) to require licensing of activities involving animals and to set associated standards for licensing. As set out above, currently no licence is required to operate a greyhound racetrack. The Scottish Government [consulted on introducing statutory licensing for greyhound racetracks in Scotland in July 2023](#), as part of a wider consultation about the licensing of activities involving animals (there is further information on this consultation [in a later section](#)).

### **England - licensing regulations with mutual recognition of GBGB standards**

In England, greyhound racetracks not regulated by GBGB must be licensed by the local authority under [the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010](#) ('2010 Regulations'), which cover conditions at the racetrack only.

These Regulations allow for 'mutual recognition' of GBGB standards, by not requiring a racetrack to be licensed under the statutory regime, by the local authority, where it is already regulated by [a UKAS-accredited body](#) (GBGB is UKAS accredited) who also require compliance with the same licensing conditions as those set out in the Regulations. Via licence conditions, the Regulations introduced minimum standards on vet presence at the track, kennelling at tracks, microchipping and recording of races and injuries. The aim was to ensure a consistent set of minimum standards in England across GBGB and independent racetracks (although [only around six 'flapper' tracks were operating when the 2010 Regulations were introduced](#), and none are still operating).

A [post-implementation review of the 2010 Regulations was carried out by Defra in 2016](#), and found that while the Regulations appeared to have been successful in establishing a set of minimum standards at all racetracks in England, there were concerns that the scope of the Regulations was too narrow, focusing only on tracks and not on kennels. The UK Parliament's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee also [undertook an inquiry into greyhound welfare and reported in 2016](#), stating that there was a broad consensus that extension of the 2010 Regulations to include kennels was necessary.

### **Wales - Government Bill to ban greyhound racing introduced September 2025**

The Welsh Government introduced [The Prohibition of Greyhound Racing \(Wales\) Bill](#) to the Senedd on 29 September 2025. If enacted, [the Bill will make it an offence to operate a stadium \(or similar venue\) for greyhound racing in Wales](#), or to be involved in organising greyhound racing in Wales. "Greyhound racing" is defined as setting greyhounds to run around a track in pursuit of a lure activated by mechanical means (including for timing or training).

Senedd Research [has published a Bill summary](#) with information on the Bill and its background, and [information on scrutiny of the Bill to date can be found on the Senedd website](#).

Similarly to Scotland, there are currently no specific regulations in Wales which apply to greyhound racing, beyond the general animal welfare protections provided by [the Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) which applies to England and Wales.

There is **one operational greyhound racing track** in Wales, [Valley Greyhound Stadium](#). It was an independent track until 2023 when it was granted a GBGB licence (after being acquired in 2021), resulting in an increase in racing activity. [The GBGB states](#) that this marked "the return of regulated greyhound racing to Wales – for the first time in over 40 years".

The [Welsh Government had announced its intention to progress towards a ban in February 2025](#), following on from [a broader consultation on animal welfare](#) in 2024 which asked for views on a phased ban and on licensing. In making the announcement, the Welsh Government highlighted [the Cut the Chase campaign](#), a campaign to ban greyhound racing by a number of animal welfare charities. It also cited [a 2022 petition in the Senedd for a ban on greyhound racing in Wales](#). The Welsh Parliament's [Petitions Committee's report on that petition](#) supported the call for a ban by a majority of the Committee. The report also noted that "a greyhound's racing career can make up a short part of its life", and recommended that Government action should not be restricted to racing and should also consider the whole life of dogs, conditions in which they are kept before and after their racing careers, and "the plight of dogs travelling through Wales on their way to races".

The Welsh Government's announcement in February 2025 set out that there "will be work to do in ensuring the dogs, their owners, and those involved in the industry around the racetrack, can wind down from this activity while still protecting the welfare of dogs currently within the industry, the local community and the local economy". It committed to establish an Implementation Group ([more details about which were provided in July 2025](#)) to guide this work.

GBGB [has announced its intention to legally challenge this decision](#) of the Welsh Government.

## Northern Ireland

There are thought to be two operating greyhound racing tracks in Northern Ireland. The regulatory body for Ireland, [Greyhound Racing Ireland \(GRI\)](#), has historically also overseen tracks in Northern Ireland.

## Scottish Parliament petition to ban greyhound racing and Committee inquiry

A petition was submitted to the Scottish Parliament ([Petition PE1758: End greyhound racing in Scotland](#)) by Gill Docherty on behalf of Scotland Against Greyhound Exploitation on 23 October 2019. The petition "calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to put an end to greyhound racing in Scotland".

The petition was referred to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee in session 5 of the Scottish Parliament, who passed the petition on to its successor in its legacy report.

The Rural Affairs and Islands (RAI) Committee decided to undertake an inquiry on the issue<sup>1</sup> taking a 'whole-life approach', considering the welfare of greyhounds bred for racing across their life, from breeding and early life, through their racing years and into retirement.

After initially hearing from the petitioner in 2022, the RAI Committee wrote to a number of stakeholders, including the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) to ask for views on the welfare of greyhounds racing in Scotland, including views on unlicensed tracks. In response to this request and to consider wider developments (e.g. reviews undertaken by animal welfare charities), the SAWC decided to set up a Working Group on the issue, and [published a report with its findings in February 2023](#), which the RAI Committee then used to progress with its inquiry.

As part of the inquiry, the Committee also issued a Call for Views [and took oral evidence from](#):

- The petitioner on 20 April 2022
- The SAWC on 29 March 2023 (following the publication of its report)
- GBGB and Paul Brignal (the operator of Thornton Racetrack) on 26 April 2023
- Animal welfare charities on 3 May 2023
- A small group of GBGB trainers and breeders (based in Scotland) on 20 March 2024
- The Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, Jim Fairlie MSP and Scottish Government officials on 22 May 2024.

The RAI Committee [published an interim report on the petition on 27th November 2024](#):

- Since the Committee concluded its evidence, Mark Ruskell MSP had secured a right to introduce a member's bill to ban greyhound racing. Members agreed therefore that the Parliament should have the opportunity to take a view on the general principles of the Bill, and given it was likely to be the lead Committee for the Bill, it **would keep the petition open** and refer back to issues raised in the inquiry when it undertakes its stage 1 scrutiny.
- On the basis of the evidence it had taken, however, whilst not taking a position on whether or not greyhound racing should be banned, the Committee **set out various broader recommendations** in relation to the animal welfare conditions associated with: breeding and the transport of greyhounds from Ireland, improvements to microchip databases for the traceability of greyhounds, provision for the inspection of kennels, and the collection of data on the health and behavioural problems of greyhounds that are retired and rehomed, stating these recommendations "would lead to a positive change to the quality of life of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland".
- The Committee noted that it had found its inquiry challenging due to the lack of independent evidence on the animal welfare implications of greyhound racing and associated breeding, kennelling, and retirement of greyhounds.

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<sup>1</sup> NB/ During the course of the inquiry, the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment (RAINE) Committee was re-named to become the Rural Affairs and Islands (RAI) Committee.

# Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) [published its Report on the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland in February 2023](#).

The report includes the following **summary and recommendations**:

1. Although there are some positive welfare aspects of racing for dogs, where gambling and other commercial activities are present, the risks of poor welfare outweigh the likely positive aspects. Thus, on average, a dog bred for racing in Scotland currently has poorer welfare than the average of other dogs in the population.
2. Independent tracks, although they may provide some social benefit, do impose some specific risks on dog welfare through the lack of immediate veterinary care to injured dogs and general veterinary oversight of dog welfare. We consider that a veterinarian must always be present when dogs are racing to minimise unnecessary suffering in the event of an injury and should have the power to prevent a dog racing if deemed unfit. The presence of a veterinarian also ensures that there is independent oversight of dog welfare, and we further recommend that this function includes the collection of independent data on injuries and fatalities at stadia. We suggest reviewing these metrics, and whether racing should continue, within the next 3-5 years, to provide the independent evidence that is currently lacking on the impact of racing on dog welfare.
3. We recommend that no further new greyhound tracks are permitted in Scotland. We are not convinced that any of the current proposed measures can safeguard greyhound welfare appropriately and believe that this will help to reduce suffering in Scotland.
4. Even if there were no racing opportunities available in Scotland, it would remain possible to own, breed, train, and kennel racing greyhounds in the country, notwithstanding that the dogs would have to be taken elsewhere to race. As greyhounds may spend a large amount of their racing lives in kennels, and consistent with our view that independent oversight and regulation is required when there is potential commercial gain, we consider that a scheme independent of GBGB is required to ensure the welfare of these animals, possibly through Local Authority regulation or under the auspices of the new Scottish Veterinary Service.

## Member consultation and summary

The Member in charge of the Bill [consulted on proposals for the Bill, supported by the Scottish Parliament's Non-Government Bills from 8 February to 1 May 2024](#). The consultation accompanied a draft proposal for a Bill, the "proposed Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Scotland) Bill", [lodged in the Scottish Parliament on 7 February 2024](#).

The consultation set out background on greyhound racing in Scotland and the UK, and raised various welfare concerns about greyhound racing. It said:

- Greyhound racing has been taking place in Scotland since the 1920s, and the fundamental principles of the activity such as track design remain largely unaltered. However, there has been a sustained decline in the activity's popularity in Scotland which used to be home to over 20 racetracks.

- As part of a race, typically 4-6 greyhounds chase a mechanical lure in an anti-clockwise direction around an oval-shaped racetrack of varying distances.
- There is an inherent risk of injury and fatality associated with racing greyhounds anti-clockwise around oval racetracks at speeds of up to 40mph, citing evidence that it said demonstrates the risk of injury on the bends of oval racetracks , including pressures on their left forelimb and right hind-limb and risk of collisions.
- A total of 22,284 injuries and 868 fatalities were recorded from 2018-2022 at licensed racetracks across Great Britain. Despite progress toward improving welfare standards at licensed racetracks, the statistics illustrate that as long as greyhounds are used in racing they will continue to suffer from inherent risks.
- In the Member’s opinion, [the Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) does not adequately protect racing greyhounds as the activity of using greyhounds in racing is currently lawful.
- There are further animal welfare concerns associated with greyhounds used for racing from birth to death, beyond injury and fatality – including the conditions under which they are bred, reared, transported, trained, raced and homed. The proposal for the Bill will not seek to legislate on these issues, however it will have consequential effects on these associated welfare concerns across the whole life cycle of greyhounds.
- In the Member’s view, while the introduction of statutory licensing scheme might improve welfare standards at racetracks in Scotland, it would not eliminate the inherent risk of injury and fatality faced by greyhounds whilst racing.

The consultation sought views on:

- The aim of the proposed Bill to ban greyhound racing in Scotland
- Whether there are other ways in which the proposed Bill’s aims could be achieved more effectively e.g. via licensing
- Other aspects of the proposals for legislation including penalties, equalities impacts.

[A consultation summary and analysis of responses was published on 26 June 2024 and a final proposal for the Bill lodged on the same day.](#) The consultation summary set out that:

- In total, 789 responses were received (21 responses attributed to organisations, all but one of which identified as third sector organisations, and 768 responses by individuals).
- A significant majority of respondents, 680 - just over 86% - were fully supportive of the proposal to prohibit greyhound racing in Scotland. A further 6 respondents (0.8%) were partially supportive. A small minority, 94 respondents, just under 12%, were fully opposed to the proposal. Four respondents (0.5%) were partially opposed. One respondent was neutral, and four respondents did not wish to express a view.
- In general, the responses were polarised with little middle ground. A very small number of respondents were supportive of legislating to impose further regulation and/ or a licensing scheme on those wishing to race greyhounds in Scotland.
- The main **reason given for fully supporting** the proposed ban on greyhound racing

in Scotland was the view that racing at speed on oval tracks is inherently dangerous often leading to significant injury, psychological trauma and death. Many accounts were given by those involved in rehoming of former racing greyhounds of difficulties respondents believed greyhounds had experienced as a direct consequence of racing. Relating to this, many respondents highlighted the short racing life of greyhounds and the high level of wastage in the industry (where animals are bred for racing but may be discarded before or after a period of racing). Respondents in support of the proposal also highlighted the resulting burden they believed racing placed on third sector organisations to care for and rehome greyhounds.

- The main **reasons given for opposing** the proposal were that greyhounds enjoy racing and organised racing provides a safe and controlled opportunity for that. Many felt that racing was currently appropriately managed with good levels of welfare for greyhounds.
- Many of those opposed noted that there is only one greyhound racing track operating in Scotland, on a small, hobbyist, scale, and that legislating for a ban on greyhound racing was therefore disproportionate.
- It was also noted by some of those opposed to the proposal that greyhound racing has long standing historic links in some communities, and concern was expressed that if racing was banned, that illegal racing may take place which could prove a greater threat to welfare.

## **Scottish Government memorandum (position on the Bill) and previous consultation on licensing**

The Scottish Government's Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, Jim Fairlie MSP, wrote to the RAI Committee on 29 August 2025 [with a memorandum setting out the Scottish Government's position on the general principles of the Bill](#).

### **The Scottish Government is supporting the general principles of the Bill.**

In setting out its position the Scottish Government:

- Acknowledges that there are risks associated with racing greyhounds around tracks of oval design and this is supported by evidence and by the SAWC in its 2023 report, and "accepts that there are legitimate animal welfare concerns associated with the racing of greyhounds on oval tracks".
- Further accepts "that the introduction of a statutory licensing framework may mitigate but would not prevent the primary animal welfare concern that this Bill seeks to eliminate".
- States that "As the Bill's focus is only to prohibit the racing of greyhounds on such tracks, we are content to support its stated aim, which is to protect the welfare of greyhounds raced on oval tracks in Scotland".

It also sets out that while the Scottish Government supports the general principles of the Bill, it "will seek to work with the Member to bring forward some changes to it":

- "For example, we will seek an amendment to the Bill so that it commences on a date to be specified by Scottish Ministers in regulations, rather than its current provision for fixed commencement 12 months from the day of Royal Assent".
- "We will also be seeking some amendments to the enforcement provisions of the Bill, which currently create bespoke new provisions for investigation, deprivation, disqualification and seizure orders rather than applying the existing, and substantially similar, provisions for animal welfare offences under Part 2 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006".

### **Scottish Government previous consultation on licensing**

As set out above, the Scottish Government [consulted on introducing statutory licensing for greyhound racetracks in Scotland in July 2023](#), as part of a wider consultation about the licensing of activities involved animals.

At that time, the Scottish Government set out that whilst it acknowledged calls from animal welfare groups for a ban on greyhound racing, it considered that an outright ban was not necessary, but that there was a strong case for the introduction of statutory licensing.

The consultation set out various proposals for what a licensing scheme (likely run by local authorities) could cover e.g. allowing for the inspection of premises, requiring standard licence conditions e.g. Requiring presence of a vet during racing, provision of adequate kennelling at tracks, and recording and publishing data on fatalities and injuries attributed to racing.

The Scottish Government [published an analysis of consultation responses in February 2024](#):

- Of the 454 responses to the question should greyhound racing be licensed, 46.3% supported the proposal. 46% of respondents answered not sure.
- Those answering "not sure", however, did so as they do not think licensing will be enough to protect the welfare of racing greyhounds and they want to see racing phased out.
- In addition, 1180 campaign respondents called for an end to greyhound racing.
- The 7.7% that did not support licensing fell into two groups. Some respondents that answered "no" (to licensing), including Scottish SPCA, Blue Cross and Dogs Trust did so because they do not believe that licensing will be sufficient to protect the welfare of racing greyhounds.
- The GBGB, who were in the alternative "no" camp, did support regulatory oversight, but made the case for this to be under the GBGB's existing framework.

On 11 September 2024, RAI Committee Members asked the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, Jim Fairlie MSP, for an update on the Scottish Government's consideration of a licensing scheme for greyhound racing. [The Minister responded](#):

“ We are still looking at all our options. As you know, a member’s bill has gathered support in the Parliament, and I do not think that we will be pursuing a licensing scheme until we see how that bill progresses through the Parliament. For a long time now, the committee has been looking at the member’s bill and at greyhound racing, and I would therefore be keen to get the committee’s views and hear your considerations. Mark Ruskell’s bill will go through the process, so we will see how it develops and take it from there.”

As set out above, on [22 May 2024 the RAI Committee discussed the petition with the Scottish Government](#) as part of its inquiry. At that time, the Minister also said that the Scottish Government was not minded to completely ban greyhound racing in Scotland. The Minister sought to emphasise his view at that time, that **'professional' tracks** i.e. GBGB tracks in England and Wales were different in nature to the Thornton track in Scotland, and that it may be disproportionate to ban what is a "pastime" in Scotland compared to "the professionalism" of what is happening down south".

The Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government was still **"considering the option of licensing"** for the Thornton track but did not provide a timeline for making a decision, stating he planned to visit the track to see what is happening there. The Minister said "I do not want the Government to ban something that is part of the social fabric of that community based on things that we have not fully explored".

The Committee also discussed a wider issue of traceability of puppies and dogs including greyhounds being imported from the Republic of Ireland, which was raised by stakeholders in evidence and in the SAWC report as a data gap. The Minister agreed there was a need for greater traceability for all dogs (not just greyhounds) and that the Scottish Government was part of a working group along with Government officials in the UK and Welsh Governments, looking at improving traceability via a single point of access to **data from microchipping** held in databases managed separately in different UK nations.

## Greyhound racing in other countries

Animal welfare charity [Blue Cross state that commercial greyhound racing](#) "is still legal in only ten countries worldwide. Four of those are UK nations".

Those countries are, according to the 2022 [Welsh Parliament Petitions Committee report](#)): Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Vietnam and the USA, although commercial greyhound racing has been banned at state/regional level in some of those countries.

[Animal welfare group Grey2UK USA states](#) that there are only active, commercial greyhound racing tracks in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA (suggesting commercial racing in Mexico and Vietnam has recently ceased).

The regulatory approach in other UK countries are [set out in a previous section](#). Some further information about the four other countries mentioned above is set out below.

**Republic of Ireland:** Greyhound racetracks in Ireland are overseen by Greyhound Racing Ireland (GRI). GRI is a **"commercial semi-state body"**, established by the Greyhound Industry Act 1958, which gave the organisation powers to regulate all aspects of greyhound racing in the Republic of Ireland including licensing tracks, issuing of permits to

bookmakers and trainers etc and the implementation of racing rules. Its [website states that GRI](#) “has licensed a total of 15 tracks in the Republic, of which nine are owned and controlled by the organisation. The remainder are owned and operated by private enterprise”. The [Greyhound Racing Act 2019](#) came into force in Ireland in 2020 aiming to increase the robustness of regulation and in particular increase traceability of racing dogs.

**New Zealand:** The New Zealand Government [announced in December 2024](#) that it plans to end greyhound racing in New Zealand from August 2026 and has introduced a [Racing Industry \(Unlawful Destruction of Specified Greyhounds\) Amendment Bill](#) (aiming to address concerns that dogs may be euthanised for economic reasons in advance of the ban). It stated that despite significant progress made by the industry in recent years in relation to welfare, “the percentage of dogs being injured remains persistently high” and that this followed three reviews of the industry in a ten-year period which all recommended significant reforms. It set out intentions to wind down the industry to enable rehoming of an estimated 2,900 racing greyhounds and to provide a transition period for people involved in the industry, and has appointed an Advisory Committee to help manage the process. Greyhound racing in New Zealand is regulated under legislation which provided for a Racing Integrity Board as the body responsible for compliance functions of racing rules, and established racing codes.

**USA:** Whilst there is no federal law banning greyhound racing in the USA, the majority of states have banned greyhound racing at state level. [According to campaign group Grey2K USA](#), there are two operational dog tracks remaining in the United States, in West Virginia, and commercial greyhound racing is illegal in 44 states.

**Australia:** Australia [reportedly has the largest commercial greyhound racing industry](#) in the world, [with 65 tracks in operation](#). There has been public debate around the legitimacy of the industry and pressure on the Government to increase regulation or close the industry in recent years. A [Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission](#) was established in 2018, following public concern about reports of animal welfare breaches. Notably, there are [a small number of straight tracks](#) in Australia (the majority being the more common oval tracks).

# What the Bill does

## Offence of racing a greyhound (section 1)

**Section 1** of the Bill creates a statutory offence of racing a greyhound on an oval racetrack.

A person commits an offence if the person:

(a) owns or is responsible for a greyhound, and

(b) knowingly causes that greyhound to run on a racetrack or knowingly permits another person to cause that greyhound to run on a racetrack.

A person “is responsible for” a greyhound where the person— (a) is responsible for the greyhound on a temporary or permanent basis, (b) is in charge of the greyhound, or (c) has actual care and control of a person under the age of 16 years who is responsible for the greyhound under paragraph (a) or (b).

“Racetrack” for the purposes of this section (and for section 2, below) is defined as “premises provided for the purpose of running greyhounds on a track that is oval in shape”.

**Penalties:** A person who commits an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding £20,000 (or both), or on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or a fine (or both).

**Power to regulate to modify the definition of racetrack:** Section 1 gives Scottish Ministers delegated power to regulate to modify the definition of “racetrack” to include “other categories of premises used for the purpose of the competing of running greyhounds”. Regulations would be subject to the affirmative procedure.

### Background

The Policy Memorandum sets out that:

“ The offence applies to any racetrack used for the purpose of racing greyhounds that is oval in shape, and therefore applies to greyhound racing at licensed and unlicensed racetracks and covers both commercial and non-commercial activities. The offences cover any racing activity, and as such apply to races, as well as time-trials and sales-trials taking place on racetracks. The racing of one or more greyhounds at a racetrack in Scotland, for whatever purpose, will be an offence.”

Regarding the focus of the Bill on oval tracks (by defining racetrack for the purposes of the Bill as one which is oval in shape), the Policy Memorandum sets out that this is a “significant factor which influences the risk of injury to greyhounds while racing” and that there is widespread evidence (citing [the 2023 SAWC review](#) and a [2018 peer-reviewed study](#)) that the bends on oval tracks increases the risk of injury to racing greyhounds and are often responsible for injuries and fatalities resulting from racing.

It further states, regarding the prevalence of oval tracks, that:

“ Given that all tracks in the UK and Ireland are/have been oval tracks, and that there is little precedent globally for straight racing (there is understood to be a straight track in Australia), the Bill prohibits racing on oval tracks. However, in order to future-proof the Bill, and due to welfare concerns of greyhounds racing on tracks of other shapes and designs, including straight tracks, the Bill also gives Scottish Ministers powers to regulate to include other track shapes and types of premises, should that become an issue in future.”

## Offence of operating a track (section 2)

Section 2 of the Bill provides that a person commits an offence if the person

- (a) owns or is responsible for the operation of a racetrack, and
- (b) knowingly causes or permits another person to cause a greyhound to run on that racetrack.

**Penalties:** A person who commits an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding £20,000 (or both), or on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or a fine (or both). These penalties are the same as for the offence under section 1 (see above).

In this section, a person is responsible for the operation of a racetrack if the person (a) manages or controls that racetrack, or (b) is authorised to give permission for another person to cause a greyhound to run on that racetrack.

NB/ Racetrack has the same meaning as for section 1, defined as "premises provided for the purpose of running greyhounds on a track that is oval in shape", with a delegated power included for Scottish Ministers to modify this definition, by regulations.

### Background

See background to section 1, above, which sets out context regarding the scope of the offence and rationale for focus on oval racetracks.

## Further provision relating to offences - including enforcement (sections 3-9)

**Section 3 of the Bill** introduces a Schedule to the Bill providing for **detailed enforcement powers** of constables in relation to suspected offences under the Bill, including powers to enter and search premises, stopping or detaining vehicles and in what circumstances greyhounds may be taken possession of.

**Section 4 of the Bill** places **time limits** on when summary proceedings may be brought for section 1 and section 2 offences.

**Section 5 of the Bill** sets out detailed provisions on '**deprivation orders**' where a court may order that a person convicted of a relevant offence give up possession and/or

ownership of a greyhound, and make provision for the destruction, sale or "another disposal" of the greyhound. The court may not order the destruction of a greyhound in a deprivation order unless it is satisfied, on evidence provided by a veterinary surgeon, that destruction "would be in the interests of the greyhound." In other cases i.e. deprivation orders which do not order destruction of the greyhound, the court must have "considered the need to ensure the welfare of the greyhound".

Where a court decides not to make a deprivation order in relation to a relevant offence, it must state its reasons unless it makes a disqualification order under section 6 (see below).

**Section 6 of the Bill** sets out detailed provisions on '**disqualification orders**', where a court may order that a person convicted of a relevant offence is disqualified from one or more of:

- (a) "owning or keeping a greyhound (or both)"
- (b) "transporting a greyhound"
- (c) "working with or using a greyhound (or both)"
- (d) "providing any service relating to greyhounds (including, in particular, for their care) which involves taking possession of a greyhound"
- (e) "taking possession of a greyhound for the purpose of an activity in respect of which a disqualification mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (d) is imposed"
- (f) "taking charge of a greyhound for any, or any other, purpose".

Disqualification from participation in an activity includes "(a) making arrangements in connection with the activity, (b) being party to arrangements under which the activity may be controlled or influenced, (c) being concerned (so far as relating to the activity) in the management or control of a body whose business involves the activity". The Bill provides that breaching a disqualification order is an offence.

**Section 7 of the Bill** sets out detailed provisions on '**seizure orders**', where a court may make an order for a greyhound to be seized where it is being owned or kept in breach of a disqualification order. Similarly to deprivation orders under section 5, a seizure order may provide for the destruction, sale or "another disposal" of the greyhound, applying the same welfare considerations as set out above.

**Section 8 of the Bill** provides for a process whereby a person subject to a disqualification order may request the court which made the order to terminate or vary it under certain circumstances. An application cannot be made in the first year of a disqualification order. In considering such an application, the court must have particular regard to (a) the nature of the offence in relation to which the disqualification order was made, (b) the character of the applicant, and (c) the applicant's conduct since the order was made.

**Section 9 of the Bill** includes provisions relating to **appeals** against deprivation or disqualification orders, including a provision enabling any person "who has an interest" in any greyhound to which a deprivation order applies to appeal to the Sheriff Appeal Court.

### **Background and further information**

The Policy Memorandum for the Bill sets out that the provisions allowing the courts to

make deprivation, disqualification and seizure orders in relation to the offences (sections 5-9) "will ensure that the courts have sufficient power and flexibility to impose appropriate sanctions on anyone found guilty of the Bill's two primary offences - including taking greyhounds present when the offence was committed away from the convicted person; ensuring that a convicted person is prevented from owning a greyhound, or using a greyhound for related activities (such as transporting a greyhound, and working with, using, or providing services for a greyhound); and seizing greyhounds from a person who breaches a disqualification order (the Bill also makes it an offence to breach a disqualification order)".

It also states that "The Member in charge wishes to ensure that the welfare and wellbeing of greyhounds are prioritised in any circumstances where such orders are made, and that a greyhound's life would only be ended if in the greyhound's best interests. The Bill therefore requires that a destruction or seizure order can only be made where a vet has advised that it would be in the best interest of the greyhound, and the court is satisfied with the evidence provided by the vet. The Bill also requires a court to consider the welfare of a greyhound before making a deprivation or seizure order requiring the sale or other disposal of the greyhound".

The [Explanatory Notes to the Bill](#) also set out some examples of where disqualification orders could apply (paragraph 24).

[Sections 39 and 40 of the Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) provide courts with existing powers to impose deprivation and disqualification orders in respect of specified animal welfare offences, and courts must consider imposing a disqualification order in respect of certain offences.

As set out in a previous section to this briefing, the Scottish Government has indicated in its memorandum on the bill that it will seek to amend the enforcement provisions of the Bill, which create "bespoke new provisions for investigation, deprivation, disqualification and seizure orders rather than applying the existing, and substantially similar, provisions for animal welfare offences under Part 2 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006".

## **Final provisions - including commencement (sections 10-14)**

**Section 10 of the Bill** provides for individual culpability where an offence under the Bill is committed by a "relevant organisation", and the commission of the offence involves either: "consent or connivance", or is "attributable to neglect" on the part of a "responsible individual". In those circumstances, the responsible individual (as well as the relevant organisation) commits the offence. For the purposes of section 10 "relevant organisation" and who may be a "responsible individual" in that organisation is set out in a table, reproduced below:

Relevant organisation	Responsible individual
Company as mentioned in section 1 of the Companies Act 2006	Director, manager, secretary or other similar officer, or, where the company's affairs are managed by its members, member
Limited liability partnership	Member
Other partnership	Partner
Any other body or association	Individual who is concerned in the management or control of its affairs

Sections 11 to 14 of the Bill deal with interpretation, ancillary provisions, commencement and short title. **Section 13 (commencement)** provides that the Act "comes into force at the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the day of Royal Assent".

## Background

Regarding commencement, the Policy Memorandum sets out a rationale for this in relation to the transition period required to end greyhound racing in Scotland:

“ The Bill, if passed, will come into force after a period of 12 months. During this period, it is envisaged that Thornton would produce a plan for winding down its activities relating to the usage of greyhounds in racing, and proactively inform owners and trainers using dogs in racing at their racetrack, as well as the public, of these plans. This period would also allow any owners and trainers who decide not to keep dogs in their care as companion animals to support the efforts of rescue and rehoming charities that are willing to care for and find suitable homes for greyhounds previously used in racing.”

The Scottish Government's memorandum on the Bill states that it will seek an amendment to the Bill "so that it commences on a date to be specified by Scottish Ministers in regulations, rather than its current provision for fixed commencement 12 months from the day of Royal Assent".

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