

Muzzling of greyhounds

Industry Practice Guide 11.0



Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice

Relevant Standards:

7.14 Any muzzle used on a greyhound must be the correct size and properly fitted, and must not cause pain, injury or distress to the greyhound. **R**

7.15 Barking muzzles must not be used. Any muzzle used on a greyhound must not restrict normal behaviour such as panting or drinking. **R**

7.16 Greyhounds must not be muzzled for more than 60 minutes at a time, and for no more than two hours in a 24-hour period, unless the greyhound is:

- a) being walked in a public place; **R**
- b) being transported in a vehicle or trailer; **R**
- c) in race day or trial kennels; **R**
- d) acclimatising to a new environment; **R**
- e) subject to a dangerous dog order made under the Companion Animals Act 1998; **R** or
- f) under written direction by a veterinarian; or the Commission. **R**

7.17 Greyhounds under the age of nine months must not be muzzled at any time, except:

- a) as part of the education process and then only whilst in the presence of the participant, **R**
- b) while being transported in a vehicle or trailer; **R** or
- c) at the written direction of a veterinarian. **R**

7.18 Any veterinary direction in relation to muzzling of a greyhound that extends for longer than 6 months must be reviewed by a veterinarian within six months from the date that the direction was issued. **R**

Greyhounds registered with the Commission must wear a muzzle in public places, including race tracks.

Muzzling of registered greyhounds is required, under both the *Companion Animals Act*, and the Rules of Racing. The NSW Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice also places limits on the use of muzzles.

Racing muzzles

The most common type of muzzle used is the wire 'racing' muzzle that slips over the greyhound's face and is held in place by a loop of wire behind the dog's ears.

It is important that any muzzle fits correctly so that it is neither too small, nor too loose. There should be approximately 2-2.5 cm clear of the nose.

Because they are made of wire, racing muzzles can be shaped to fit the greyhound by bending the nose and neck wires, or sides of the muzzle to fit.

All muzzles must be fitted in such a way that the greyhound is still able to open its mouth to pant and drink at all times.

Wire greyhound muzzles come in different sizes and are usually colour-coded to indicate the size.



Plastic muzzles

Many trainers may also use plastic "basket" or "American" muzzles. Being made of plastic, basket muzzles pose a lower risk to the greyhound if they bend or break, but they are not approved for racing.



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Barking muzzles

Barking muzzles restrict a greyhound's ability not just to bark but also to, pant effectively, eat and drink. There are several different styles of barking muzzle available.

Restricting a greyhound's ability to eat and drink poses a serious risk to its well-being. The NSW Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice prohibits the use of barking muzzles. Any muzzle used on a greyhound must not restrict its ability to pant or drink.

Limits on muzzling

Muzzles are part of keeping greyhounds, and most greyhounds learn to wear one comfortably. Many are quite comfortable with a muzzle but it is not natural attire for a dog.

For this reason, the Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice prohibits the use of muzzles on puppies under the age of 9 months. Puppies must not be muzzled unless it is part of the education process, while under supervision by a participant, or while the puppy is being transported in a vehicle or trailer.

Similarly, the Code also places limits on the muzzling of adult greyhounds. Greyhounds must not be muzzled for more than 1 hour each day.

A greyhound can be muzzled for longer periods only if it is:

- being walked in a public place
- being transported in a vehicle or trailer
- in race day or trial kennels
- acclimatising to a new environment
- subject to a dangerous dog order made under the Companion Animals Act 1998
- it under written direction from the Commission.

Restrictions on the muzzling of puppies or greyhounds do not apply where a veterinarian directs that the greyhound is to wear a muzzle (for example, if it is recovering from injury).

However, a veterinarian's direction relating to muzzling must be in writing. If the direction extends for more than 6 months, it must also be reviewed within six months from it being made.

Changes to muzzling requirements

In 2019 the NSW Government amended the *Companion Animals Regulation* to abolish the requirement for pet greyhounds to wear a muzzle in public places, with the exception of designated off-leash areas (dog parks). Greyhounds that have a Green Collar exemption can also go muzzle-free in off-leash areas.

These changes only apply to greyhounds that are registered as companion animals (that is, registered on the NSW Pet Registry).

Greyhounds registered under the *Greyhound Racing Act 2017* (that is, registered with the Commission) are still required to wear a muzzle while in a public place.

