

Principles in the treatment of serious injuries and euthanasia of racing greyhounds



These guiding principles outline the welfare and ethical considerations behind the decisions made by On Track Veterinarians (OTVs) in the treatment of serious injuries; and whether on-track euthanasia of a racing greyhound should be considered.

The safety and welfare of racing greyhounds is of paramount importance to all involved in greyhound racing, including participants, stakeholders; those involved with race-track preparation; and race officials.

Pre-race inspections of tracks performed by GWIC Stewards, and pre-race examinations of all racing greyhounds by OTVs, are aimed at providing the safest possible racing environment, where only greyhounds which are fit to race are permitted to compete. It is not possible to adequately diagnose all underlying injuries or stress fractures, which may predispose to serious injuries when racing, during a routine pre-race veterinary check. With technological advancements, it may be possible to detect sub-clinical injuries in the future.

During racing, collisions and accidents at high speed can occur, which sometimes result in serious injuries. OTVs are there to provide the necessary pain relief, assessments and veterinary care to ensure the best possible prognosis for any further off-track veterinary treatment and rehabilitation.

The following principles guide all decisions made by the veterinary professionals who work at the track every day, in order to protect the welfare of all greyhounds competing in NSW:

1. The welfare of the greyhound is the primary consideration in all decisions. The OTVs are always there to protect our canine athletes and act in their best interests. OTVs do consult with owners and trainers but place the needs of the injured greyhound above all other considerations.
2. OTVs assess the prognosis of the injury and, in formulating their treatment plan, will consider longer-term treatment options, rehabilitation time and a greyhound's chances of returning to a pain-free, happy and active life following an injury.
3. Relieving pain and treating injuries takes precedence over any future adoption or re-homing potential of a greyhound. Providing a future home for every healthy and happy greyhound remains the obligation of all greyhound racing industry participants.
4. OTVs do not consider the prospect for a future return to a racing career at the time of deciding on treatment for an injury, nor must they take into consideration the economic value of a greyhound. The immediate welfare need of the greyhound is their primary consideration.
5. OTVs will provide pain relief and stabilise the injury to prevent further pain.
6. OTVs must consider the amount of time and risks involved with travel to the nearest veterinary facility for further off-track treatment. The welfare risks associated with the logistics of providing further veterinary care to an injured greyhound is a very important part of their decision to continue with treatment. Delayed euthanasia remains

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a welfare risk to greyhounds and, where time and distance are likely to result in unnecessary suffering, euthanasia may be considered the most appropriate and humane option.

7. OTVs recognise that where pain and unnecessary suffering is not able to be alleviated and where the prognosis is such that there is little, if any, chance of a greyhound returning to an active life following the injury, free from chronic pain, then euthanasia will be considered as the most appropriate and humane option.
8. OTVs remain the primary decision makers in the treatment of greyhounds injured during racing. While the Guidelines for the Treatment of Racing Injuries and Euthanasia may assist OTVs with decision making, they do not supersede the professional judgement of the treating OTV.
9. OTVs are advocates for the welfare of racing greyhounds and their professional judgement and decision-making is, and must be, supported by all stakeholders.

There is a need for ongoing research to explore further improvements to the safety and welfare of racing greyhounds by examining drivers and contributing factors to injuries and how best they can be mitigated. The Commission is committed to the development of evidence-based, best practice safety and welfare initiatives as well as the timely and transparent reporting of all injuries and on-track euthanasia.



Edition 1: March 2021
Review Date: February 2022