

Open letter to the Greyhound Board of Great Britain

We the undersigned, a group of passionate stakeholders in the sport of greyhound racing made up of trainers, kennel staff, breeders, owners, journalists and more, have observed with alarm the rapid decline in standards and morale across the sport in recent years.

We are concerned that without urgent action, greyhound racing, which was once the second most popular spectator sport after football, will suffer sufficient reputational damage that it will lose its social license.

While we acknowledge the recent improvements in welfare, we feel it is essential to restore high standards and a professional image across greyhound racing if we are to repair its reputation, reinvigorate participants and stem the flow of owners, trainers young and old, and others leaving the sport.

We call on the governing body, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB), to urgently implement the recommendations listed below in order to ensure the sport that we love has a viable future.

- Licensing of track staff to be subject to achieving and demonstrating a sufficient level of knowledge regarding their particular role, eg hare driving, track preparation, paddock duties etc
- To implement an evidence-led Continuing Professional Development programme to ensure those entering the sport can see a viable future and the opportunity to progress their career, while maintaining the best standard of practice within their roles and learning from those best placed to share working knowledge
- To ensure promoters observe a basic set of standards regarding the smooth, safe and prompt running of meetings
- To ensure promoters invest in regular maintenance of track surface, and all mechanical aspects of running a meeting - hare, traps, lighting, cameras etc.
- To ensure track staff receive sufficient training to complete their duties to a high standard and that their appearance and dress is professional, maintaining the desired image of the sport

- Racing offices to work closely with track vets to ensure dogs receive the correct review before racing to ensure unwell, injured and lame greyhounds are prevented from racing, with added focus on dogs who were suspected to be lame on previous outings
- To ensure the racing schedule is proportionate to the racing strength of each track - cutting down on the number of race meetings to ensure dogs don't race too often and that empty traps are avoided
- To create a working group charged with devising measures to ease the rehoming crisis
- To ensure promoters supply individual injury statistics for each track
- To implement a roadmap for the future which delivers a more sustainable form of racing:
 - discouraging large kennels which own a huge number of dogs.
 - removing the stipulation for a minimum number of dogs a trainer must have to secure a contract at a track, thus removing one of the main barriers to new trainers entering the sport
 - to discourage run money-only deals
 - to lead a review in to the prize money structure in the UK, which does not reward excellence and in its current form encourages running dogs purely for run money with no aspirations of excelling and maximising their performance
 - to remove the idea of trainers being handicapped to a win percentage - every dog should be handicapped on its merit, encouraging the trainer to get the best out of their dogs, and not limiting the whole kennel to a specific win percentage
- To lobby government and the betting industry to establish a statutory levy, similar to that in horse racing, to aid greyhound welfare and the general raising of standards across the industry. This is an initiative that was recommended by a 2015/16 cross-party report of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, which at the time included current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

- To launch initiatives to encourage greyhound ownership, with the aim of re-engaging with previous owners who have left the sport, and attracting new ones
- To make a concerted effort to attract sponsorship and television coverage for the sport's major competitions, in order to raise the sport's profile and grow its audience
- To encourage promoters to schedule racing, particularly open racing, at times which are convenient and attractive to owners and other racegoers
- To investigate the exportation of dogs to countries with no welfare standards as a pressing issue, rather than reacting to individual cases
- To implement a more consistent regime of drug testing, with agreed timescales for consistent and proportionate penalties
- To review the current make up of the GBGB board which has led to a conflict of interest regarding decision making over the sport's best interests and board members' commercial interests. Also to consider fairer representation on the board for a wider range of stakeholders, and more transparency in decision making