

New Regulations for racing greyhounds in England

The welfare of racing greyhounds became a topic of public interest around five years ago when concerns were raised over the welfare of dogs both at the racetrack and once their racing lives had finished. Following these concerns, the Government gave a commitment, under the Animal Welfare Bill 2006, to introduce secondary legislation specifically to safeguard the welfare of racing greyhounds.

Considerable work has since been undertaken in the area, including two prominent investigations: an independent review of the greyhound racing industry, led by Lord Donoughue, and a six-month inquiry into the welfare of racing greyhounds, by the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare. Additionally, many working groups and meetings between industry representatives and welfare groups have taken place, along with a full public consultation of a set of draft Regulations in 2009. The culmination of this work is the 'Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010', published in March 2010 and in effect from April 2010.

The new Regulations hope to both improve the welfare of racing greyhounds in England and improve the traceability of greyhounds once they leave the sport. To this end, a number of minimum standards have been introduced and any person operating a greyhound racing track will now be required to obtain a licence from their local authority. In order for a licence to be granted a number of key conditions will have to be satisfied, including:

- A veterinary surgeon must be present at all race meetings, race trials and sales trials to inspect any dog before it runs and to provide first aid treatment where necessary;
- Appropriate facilities must be provided for the veterinary surgeon, including: a lockable room, lockable drug cabinet, hot and cold running water, fridge, freezer, and an examination table — these facilities must be in close proximity of the track and for the sole use of the attending veterinary surgeon;
- All tracks must provide ventilated kennelling for at least 20% of the dogs present and kennels must be of a minimum size (although the minimum dimension will not apply to kennels built before the Regulations came into force);
- All racing greyhounds must be uniquely identified by both a microchip and, if born after the date the Regulations come into force, via an earmark — these details must be placed on a national database;
- All tracks must keep records of all greyhounds raced or trialed, along with current owner and trainer details — records must be kept for a minimum of ten years; and
- The attending veterinary surgeon must record any injury sustained by a greyhound whilst racing and a record of this injury must be kept at the track for a minimum of ten years.

The Regulations are predominantly aimed at 'independent' tracks. There are 33 racing tracks in England and the majority (26) are regulated by the Greyhound Board of

Great Britain (GBGB). The remaining seven operate independently. The GBGB have their own welfare standards (which already comply with the Regulations) and they have recently received UKAS accreditation to act as a regulator of welfare standards at a national level. Tracks registered with the GBGB will be exempt from the licence requirement in the Regulations whilst independent tracks will be required to obtain a licence from their local authority.

The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010 (March 2010). A4, 10 pages. Published by the Stationary Office Limited. A copy of the Regulations can be found at the Office of Public Sector Information website: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20100543_en_1.

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Wild bird care in the garden: a scientific look at large scale, do-it-yourself, wildlife management

In May, veterinary surgeons, epidemiologists, wildlife biologists, conservationists, animal welfare scientists and other concerned individuals met at the Zoological Society of London to discuss wild garden birds and the impact that human interaction with these birds has on their health and welfare. Of particular interest was the practice of supplementary feeding.

The symposium started with an introduction by Dr James Kirkwood (UFAW) detailing the background to this meeting, the genesis of which was the formation of the Garden Bird Health Initiative in 2003. The GBHi aims were to develop and publish guidelines about how to best feed garden birds in order to maximise the benefits for their welfare and conservation and, with the help of a network of members of the public used as its 'eyes and ears', to undertake a major garden bird health surveillance and research project. One of the areas of particular interest was the epidemiology of infectious diseases amongst those birds that visit feeding stations.

The talks that followed reflected this enterprise and its interests. Dr Kirkwood was followed by Chris Whittles (CJ WildBird Food Ltd) who gave a short history of garden bird feeding, focusing particularly on the role and quality of food being put out for garden birds; from suet balls and low grade peanuts in red plastic net bags in the 1960s, to the current diverse range of polycarbonate and metal tubular feeders and foods such as mealworms, peanut cakes, nyjer seed and sunflower hearts.

The next speaker, Dr Darryl Jones (Griffith University) discussed attitude to wild bird feeding in Australia. Unlike the UK, where supplementary feeding of birds is generally regarded as a positive activity, he reported active opposition to the practice, especially amongst those who were more conservation-minded. In Australia, the birds visiting feeders tend to be more carnivorous and meats and cheeses are a feature of the food put out. Conservationist groups are concerned that such food supplementation may artificially increase the density of these predatory species, as well as