

## Greyhound racing



*Objective: to end greyhound racing in the state.*

### Introduction

West Virginia is one of only seven states to sanction greyhound racing. Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, and Texas are the others. It's time for West Virginia to join the 38 states that have banned this inhumane "sport" outright. (There are five states where dog tracks have closed but there are no laws in those states against racing.)

### Greyhound racing in the state

Greyhounds have been abused at West Virginia racetracks for decades. The nonprofit greyhound protection organization GREY2K USA has reported, "[g]reyhounds at West Virginia dog tracks endure lives of confinement, and many suffer terrible injuries." (View report "Greyhound Racing in West Virginia" at [www.fohowv.org](http://www.fohowv.org).)

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Commercial dog racing takes place at two tracks in the state: Wheeling Island Casino (Wheeling) and Mardi Gras Casino and Resort (Charleston).

Similar to conditions at puppy mills (see position paper on commercial breeders at [www.fohowv.org](http://www.fohowv.org)), the conditions at greyhound racing kennels are deplorable.

Greyhounds are kept confined in stacked cages which are barely large enough for them to stand up or turn around. They are "turned out" out in groups to relieve themselves; but most of their days, weeks, months, and years are spent in their solitary cages.

GREY2K USA also found that between January 2008 and June 2013, 4,796 greyhound injuries were reported at West Virginia racetracks. More than 1,400, or 30 percent, of the injuries were career ending; and a total of 289 greyhound injuries resulted in death or euthanasia. The types of injuries greyhounds suffer include broken legs, cardiac arrest, spinal cord injuries, and broken necks.

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The Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia, INC. website promoting animal welfare throughout the state.

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hounds testing positive for drugs, humans testing positive for drugs, and altercations between licensees.

To keep costs at a minimum for owners, the dogs are provided little veterinary care, if any. Additionally, they are fed poor quality food, referred to as 4-D meat. Such meat is from dead, downed, diseased, and dying animals and is used by the greyhound industry because it is cheap.

### What happens to the dogs?

Many greyhound puppies must be bred to produce winners in greyhound racing. No one knows exactly what happens to the unlucky ones who are not able to perform.

It has long been believed that unwanted puppies as well as unprofitable racers may be sold or donated for experimentation; shot in the head; shipped overseas to countries like Ireland, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom; or abandoned to die of starvation.

Some of the fortunate ones are released to rescue groups that find homes for them. While there are many greyhound rescues across the country, there simply aren't enough available homes to place all the greyhounds in need.

There's another category of animals whose lives are doomed by the greyhound racing industry. Rabbits and other small animals are often used to train young greyhounds. They become lures and are killed by the dogs when caught.

### **West Virginia taxpayers support greyhound racing**

Gambling revenues from video and table games that would ordinarily go to the state treasury go to the owners of winning greyhounds. This revenue could better be used to serve the citizens of West Virginia and not the owners, who often are not residents of the state. In essence then, the taxpayers of West Virginia are supporting greyhound racing even if they are not aware they are.

### **Conclusion**

Greyhound racing is a dying industry. Gambling on greyhound racing has declined by 37 percent at West Virginia racetracks since 2008.

Several track executives have publicly acknowledged that dog racing is no longer viable; and in 2012, the Wheeling Island track requested a reduction in the number of live races it is required to conduct. It's time for West Virginia to prohibit this cruelty.

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## **Animal cruelty**

**Animal cruelty is simply not to be tolerated. Whenever we witness animal cruelty, we must do something about it or we become part of the cruelty itself. WV has laws that protect animals from cruel acts.**

**61-8-19. Cruelty to animals; penalties; exclusions.** "(a) If any person cruelly mistreats, abandons or withholds proper sustenance, including food, water, shelter that protects from the elements of weather or medical treatment, necessary to sustain normal health and fitness or to end suffering or abandons any animal to die, or intentionally, knowingly or recklessly leaves an animal unattended and confined in a motor vehicle when physical injury to or death of the animal is likely to result, or rides an animal when it is physically unfit, or baits or harasses any animal for the purpose of making it perform for a person's amusement, or cruelly chains or tethers any animal or uses, trains or possesses any domesticated animal for the purpose of seizing, detaining or mistreating any other domesticated animal, he or she is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than three hundred nor more than two thousand dollars or confined in jail not more than six months, or both. (b) If any person intentionally tortures, or mutilates or maliciously kills an animal, or causes, procures or authorizes any other person to torture, mutilate or maliciously kill an animal, he or she is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be confined in a correctional facility not less than one nor more than five years and be fined not less than one thousand dollars nor more than five thousand dollars. For the purposes of this subsection, 'torture' means an action taken for the primary purpose of inflicting pain."

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## **Endnotes**

Most of the information contained in this article comes from the report "Greyhound Racing in West Virginia," September 2013 published by GREY2K USA.