

CHILDREN WITH RETIRED RACERS

The relationship between children and pets can offer many positive benefits, including teaching responsibility and helping children develop important life skills such as empathy, care, and respect for other living beings. Pets are an important part of Australian households, with studies showing that over 83 per cent of people have had an animal companion during their childhood. It is therefore understandable that many families feel their home is not complete without a pet.

Owning a greyhound can be a highly rewarding experience for the entire family. However, it is essential that parents understand the responsibilities involved in introducing a dog into a home with young children and actively work to ensure a safe and positive experience for both the child and the greyhound.

Supervision is essential

Dog bite statistics consistently show that young children are at a higher risk of serious injury due to their size and behaviour. The most significant contributing factor in dog bite incidents is lack of adequate adult supervision. Unfortunately, many incidents reported in the media involve situations where children were left unsupervised with a family dog for extended periods.

While retired racing greyhounds can make excellent family companions, it is important to remember that many have had limited exposure to children during their racing career. As a result, some may find certain behaviours or interactions unfamiliar or overwhelming.

Promoting safety for children and dogs

Most accidents involving dogs and children can be prevented through a combination of education, supervision, and understanding of canine behaviour. Parents and caregivers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of both children and the adopted greyhound, as well as any visiting children.



It is important to learn to recognise signs of stress or arousal in dogs. Subtle body language cues such as lip licking, panting, dilated pupils, trembling, or a tense or worried facial expression may indicate that a dog is no longer comfortable. If these signs are observed, intervention is required immediately. In most cases, calmly moving the dog to a quiet, safe space away from children will allow them to settle and relax.

Teaching children safe interactions

Children should always be actively supervised when interacting with a greyhound. They should be taught appropriate ways to approach, pat, and play with the dog, as well as how to behave around unfamiliar dogs.

A key safety rule is that children should always ask the dog's owner before approaching or touching a dog. If an owner is not present, children should not approach the dog.

Children should also understand that not all dogs are comfortable with the same interactions. Hugging, kissing, or placing faces close to a dog's face should be avoided, as should direct eye contact or staring, which dogs may interpret as threatening.

From a dog's perspective, these interactions can be confusing or intimidating, as they differ significantly from natural canine social behaviour.

Managing visitors and playtime

When children have friends over, or visiting children are present, extra supervision is essential. Group play can become loud, energetic, and unpredictable, which may overwhelm or excite a greyhound.

In these situations, it is often best to provide the greyhound with a quiet, secure space away from the activity. Once a dog becomes highly aroused or stressed, they are more likely to act impulsively, increasing the risk of unwanted behaviour.

Creating safe spaces and routines

Your greyhound should have a designated quiet area where they can rest undisturbed. Providing separate spaces for children and dogs at appropriate times helps create a calm and manageable environment for everyone.

The greyhound should be given time away from children during rest periods, mealtimes, and whenever direct supervision is not possible.

Greyhounds are accustomed to eating and resting in calm, individual environments and may not be used to having people nearby during these times. Some dogs may show protective behaviour around food or resting areas, including growling or other warning signals if they feel uncomfortable.

Greyhounds are also known for sleeping deeply and may startle if suddenly disturbed, so they should always be allowed to rest undisturbed in a safe, quiet location.