



From racing to retirement

A guide for greyhound breeders, trainers and owners

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The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission is an independent statutory body which oversees the integrity and welfare standards of racing animals and racing industry participants in Queensland.

The Commission is committed to the promotion of practices that improve the welfare of all greyhounds from birth through training and racing to retirement.

This guide provides advice that will assist you in planning and providing a successful transition for your greyhounds from racing to retirement.

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The Rules of Racing

Breeders, owners and trainers of racing greyhounds owe a duty of care to their dogs under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001.

Duty of care includes the appropriate provision of food and water, accommodation and veterinary treatment for their greyhounds.

Under the local rule of racing, you are expected to make every effort to find a suitable retirement home for your retired greyhound.

There are also statutory animal welfare obligations within the Racing Integrity Act 2016 through Sections 3(1)(c) and 10(i) of the Act. The Act safeguards the welfare of all animals involved in racing whether directly or indirectly and whether lawfully or unlawfully.

Identifying a Retirement Home

As the owner of a racing greyhound, you are responsible for planning for the retirement of your greyhound regardless of whether you are retiring it prior to racing, or at the conclusion of its racing career.

You should identify early in the greyhound's career where it is going to live out the rest of its life, being aware that greyhounds generally live to about 10 - 12 years of age.

Greyhounds make great pets. Even when in full race training, they are generally placid, well-mannered and easy to handle dogs. They are friendly, affectionate, lazy, calm, clean, loving, trusting and good-natured which makes them very easy to live with.

The Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP)

The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission provides support for retired racing greyhounds by facilitating adoptions and by providing green collar assessments for retired greyhounds through its Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP).

The program has very high demand, which can mean waiting periods before entry. It is your responsibility to look after your greyhound for its entire life, not just for its racing life.

You can place your greyhound on the waiting list for green collar assessment through GAP by completing a Participant Rehoming form via the GAP website at gapqld.com.au.

Winding-down after racing

GAP requires that greyhounds have been desexed, are up to date with their vaccinations and away from racing activities, including training, for a minimum of 28 days before they are presented for green collar assessment.

This is to ensure that any retiring greyhound has time away from all racing related activities (including breaking, education, trailing, training or racing) to maximise its chances of being rehomed.

To maximise the opportunities for a greyhound to be suitable for adoption, the wind-down period should be used to proactively undertake activities that help to prepare them for transition to life as a pet. The wind-down period should help the owner understand the type of home that their greyhound may be suitable for.

Green Collar assessments

All Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP) greyhounds which pass the GAP assessment process have successfully undergone green-collar accreditation, which provides an exemption from muzzling of the greyhound in local council areas where muzzling would otherwise be required under the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008.

As part of the green collar assessment, greyhounds are evaluated with a range of 'assessment dogs' to determine their behavioural responses, including prey drive. The green collar accreditation does not guarantee that GAP greyhounds are going to be compatible with every other dog that they will meet.

Like any other breed of dog, greyhounds are all individuals and circumstances may change over time.

GAP staff will always carefully assess each greyhound to determine its level of compatibility with families who may have other pets.

Not yet competent for a green collar assessment does not mean that the greyhound will not pass on another day, particularly if you take the time to work with the dog.

A period of additional socialisation and/ or obedience training at home with you will assist some greyhounds in becoming competent in the green collar assessment on another day.

Not yet competent with a green collar assessment does not mean that the dog will not be a good pet, it just means that it may not be suitable to be un-muzzled in public.

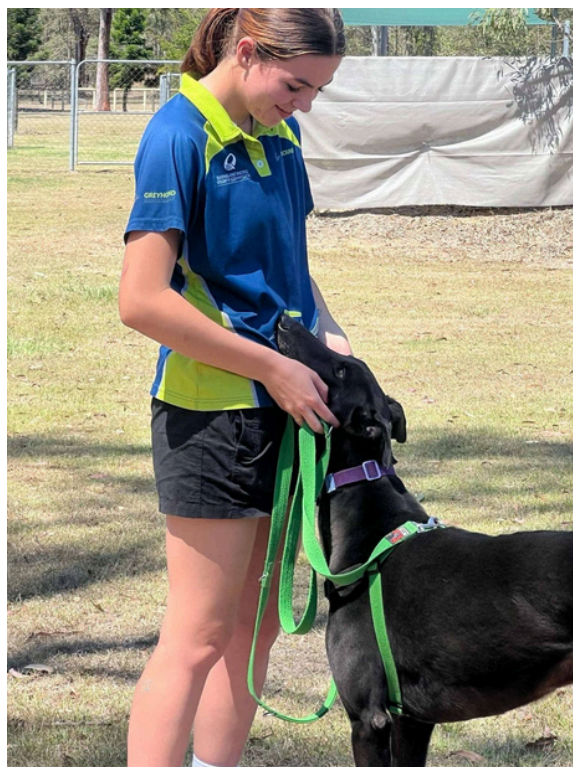
Greyhound Behaviour

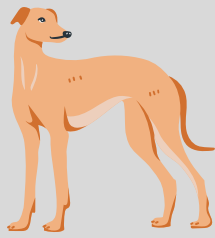
A racing greyhound has many attributes, including an inherent desire to chase ('prey drive'), athletic ability and an adaptable mental attitude.

As with all dogs, natural attributes must be backed by appropriate socialisation, management, husbandry, rearing and training.

Adaptability has a genetic basis and greyhounds are generally considered to be a mentally adaptable breed. This means that greyhounds have the ability to fully adjust from a full racing career to a family environment as a pet.

The greyhounds that make ideal pets are the ones that are socialised early and throughout their lifetime with other dogs of various breeds, cats, people (including small children) and a range of situations. These situations must expose the animal to a range of stimuli including different sights, smells, sounds and physical surfaces.





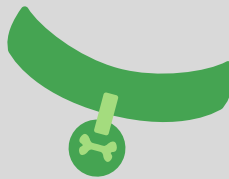
Greyhound finishes racing and is retired



Complete medical/desexing



Undertake wind down and socialisation activities



Undertake Green Collar assessment



Complete PRP form



Competent



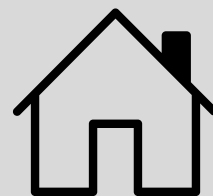
Listed on GAP website for adoption



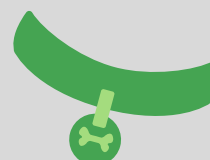
Adopted



Not yet competent



Undertake further socialisation activities



Rebook Green Collar assessment

Socialising Greyhounds

At the conclusion of a greyhound's racing career socialization is very important, however this should build on experiences undertaken throughout the greyhound's life and during several key periods.

Exposing your greyhound to different environments, putting the greyhound into an outside yard, taking them to different places that exposes them to other sights, smells and sounds will assist your greyhound in transitioning to pet life.

The Critical Socialisation Period

The first part of the rearing that is critical to success is what is commonly called the 'socialisation' period, but probably better defined as critical learning period, which occurs at approximately 3 - 17 weeks of age. Learning continues beyond this point, but it happens more slowly.

Greyhounds need to be exposed to as wide a range of stimuli as possible at this age, including dedicated periods of human and other animal contact and socialisation, i.e. not limited to feeding time.

Unfortunately, what is learnt can also be forgotten, so ongoing socialisation and exposure to various situations throughout their lifetime is vital.

Fear Impact Periods

Greyhounds are particularly sensitive to stimuli in two key periods commonly around 9 - 10 weeks of age and 9 - 10 months (although this is variable).

During these periods greyhounds are prone to developing excessive fear of a particular stimulus that they have a bad experience with. This can develop into generalised fear where they become timid.

These dogs can become aggressive in some circumstances (commonly 'fear biting') and present serious challenges when it comes to re-homing.

It is important to identify fear periods with each puppy (if they occur) and take active steps to prevent negative experiences, as well as appropriate, positive training to rectify these behaviours if they arise.

Your veterinarian or other qualified animal behaviour specialist can assist you with support in this area – it may take only one session to give you the tools you need to help a frightened dog stop its inappropriately aggressive behaviour.

Prey Drive and Aggression

Prey drive is the instinctive inclination of a predator to find, pursue and capture prey. Prey drive has a very strong genetic basis and has been shown to be a positive experience for the animal.

It is a clearly distinct behaviour to aggression, which also has a genetic basis. Greyhound racing utilises the prey drive of the dogs in chasing the lure. In many dogs, prey drive is so strong that the chance to satisfy the drive with the chance to chase is its own reward. This is why it is essential that greyhounds are socialized appropriately with other animals.

Appropriate exposure to other animals will allow the greyhound to learn that they are not prey items.

Prey drive cannot be eliminated from greyhounds but can potentially be modified or suppressed, and the dog can learn self-control.

Exposure to new animals and young children should always be in a controlled environment, and the greyhound should be on leash and muzzled. Introductions and interactions should cease immediately if the greyhound shows any signs of predatory or aggressive behaviour, including barking, growling, lunging and stalking.

It requires a caring and appropriately educated adult to assist a greyhound to learn and reinforce appropriate behaviour and new expectations.

Aggression is driven by emotional factors and is a negative experience for the animal and can be more difficult to suppress or modify. For example, aggression might be triggered by physical mistreatment. Fortunately, greyhounds are a breed with inherently low aggressive tendencies.

Transitioning to Retirement

Regardless of what age your greyhound is when they retire you will need to make some adjustments to their routines and provide increased opportunities for socialisation.

Racing and Trialing

It is important that once you have decided to transition your greyhound to retirement that you no longer train, race or trial them. This will assist the greyhound to adjust to its new life.

Feeding/Weight

Retired greyhounds should be allowed to gain some additional weight over and above their racing weight. The amount needed will vary, but should on average be at least two kilograms.

Ask your veterinarian for guidance on this if you have any questions or concerns.

Housing

When rehomed, many greyhounds will have the run of a suburban garden block so it is important to provide them with an opportunity to get used to being free in larger spaces.

Handling and basic pet skills

Greyhounds should already have or be should be taught basic life skills - walking on a leash without pulling or lunging, staying calm when handled, appropriate toileting and coming when called.

Exercise and Socialisation

Exercise remains an important part of your greyhound's life.

Following the conclusion of racing their exercise regime should be slowly decreased until the regime consists of two twenty minute walks on leash per day.

Socialisation Activities

Activities should include:

- exposure to different flooring surfaces such as carpet, concrete, tiles, wood floors, bricks, stairs;
- increasing exposure to people in a non-training/non-racing setting which should include play time and may include obedience training;

- travelling inside a car - you should help your greyhound learn to jump up into the car without you lifting it;
- get the greyhound used to short daily periods of isolation from other greyhounds and people, starting with 30 minutes and gradually increasing to three to four hours in duration;
- exposure to a variety of noises: children and family sounds, televisions, radios, cars, trucks, motorbikes, lawn mowers, trains, household appliances, vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers;
- exposure to small dogs and other larger dogs (the greyhound should be muzzled and on leash at all times and the interaction should be immediately ceased if the greyhound shows signs of predatory or aggressive behaviour).

Greyhound Development Skill Sets

In order for puppies of any breed to grow into mentally stable, happy and sociable adult dogs, they must be providing them with a variety of toys and play environments and by engaging them in play.

The following skill development milestones provide a basic guide that can help you to ensure that your greyhounds grow into well-rounded adults with great potential for life as household pets on retirement from racing.

By putting time into your young dogs, you will make much life easier for yourself and the greyhounds when it is time for them to retire from racing.

Young dogs should be handled regularly, well socialised and positively exposed to the world.

Greyhound puppies should have daily exposure to people and be engaged with people through interactive play.

You can develop your pups' motor skills and coordination as they grow by offering them safe toys and games, periodically rotated to present different challenges, and granting them access to quality yard runs, contributing to overall fitness.



For more information visit

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