



## About Blue Cross

Blue Cross is a charity that has been helping sick, injured, abandoned and homeless pets since 1897. We care for around 40,000 pets every year, providing veterinary care, rehoming services, and expert behaviour help, as well as advice and education for current or future pet owners and pet bereavement support.

## Background

Greyhound racing is a dying industry in the UK and internationally. There are currently only 21 tracks in the UK – 19 of which are located in England, 1 in Wales, and 1 in Scotland. In recent months, both Wales and New Zealand have announced they are undertaking plans to end greyhound racing in their respective countries, which will leave England and Scotland as two of only eight countries worldwide in which commercial greyhound racing still takes place.

As part of the Greyhound Forum, which comprises animal welfare organisations and industry bodies working together to improve racing greyhound welfare, Blue Cross worked with the greyhound racing industry for over a decade to try to improve conditions for the dogs involved in the sport. While this led to some improvements, in 2022 we – along with Dogs Trust and the RSPCA - concluded there are still significant welfare issues for racing greyhounds which have not been resolved and cannot be resolved. Consequently, we have been calling for a phased end to greyhound racing.

## Welfare Concerns

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) is the self-regulating organisation that governs licensed greyhound racing in Great Britain. Data from GBGB show that over **2,700** greyhounds died or were put to sleep and nearly **26,000** injuries were recorded from greyhound racing between 2018 and 2023<sup>1</sup>. These figures do not cover dogs that are killed or injured in the UK's only unlicensed track in Fife.

There are significant issues associated with the industry which detrimentally affect welfare. These include:

- Serious challenges for greyhound physical and mental health at all stages of their racing career. For example, some of the dogs used in racing are kept in poor, barren conditions, with little if any enrichment and fed a poor diet.
- Greyhound racing is inherently dangerous for the dogs involved. Running at speed around oval tracks causes significant injury to many dogs, and in some cases the injuries are so severe that it is necessary to euthanise the dog.
- Significant issues around the racing of greyhounds in extreme weather and the number of puppies that are unaccounted for between birth and racing registrations, so often referred to by the sector as the "wastage".

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<sup>1</sup> Data taken from GBGB's Injury and Retirement Data <https://www.gbgb.org.uk/welfare-care/injury-and-retirement-data/>



There is also disjointed and ineffective regulation within the sector, a lack of transparency regarding industry practices, and additional concerns around the enforcement of regulatory standards.

### **The legislative situation**

As animal welfare is devolved, we are urging Westminster to follow the examples set in both Wales and Scotland and act to end greyhound racing in the UK once and for all, so we no longer lag behind in animal welfare standards being set elsewhere in the UK and internationally.

#### **Wales**

On 18 February this year, Welsh Deputy First Minister Huw Irranca-Davies announced the Welsh Government's plans to introduce legislation to wind down greyhound racing "as soon as practically possible". This process will involve consultation with an implementation group, of which Blue Cross will be a member, to ensure that the racing greyhounds can find loving homes, and examples of best practice are learned from other countries such as New Zealand who have been through the same situation.

#### **Scotland**

Mark Ruskell MSP has been working on a Member's Bill, expected to be introduced in the Scottish Parliament in April, which if passed would end greyhound racing in Scotland. We have reached out to the relevant Scottish Government Minister Jim Fairlie, along with all MSPs, urging them to support the Bill and follow Wales' example.

#### **Westminster**

Action in both Welsh and Scottish Parliaments places Westminster at risk of falling behind and out of step with its counterparts. Momentum is growing for similar legislation, in October 2024 we handed in a petition to Downing Street featuring **111,115** signatures from across the UK, calling for legislation to ban greyhound racing.

### **How you can help**

We are looking for partners in Westminster we can work with to help us encourage the Government to look again at greyhound racing and the concerns being raised. You can help by:

- Tabling Parliamentary Questions – we have a number we would be happy to supply.
- Writing to the Minister responsible for animal welfare to encourage her to include an end to greyhound racing in the Government's forthcoming programme for animal welfare.
- Writing to DCMS to encourage the Department to request more information from GBGB, including at which tracks the most injuries and deaths occur.

We would be more than happy to meet with you to talk you through our position, and provide you with more statistics and case studies, and possibly even meet an ex-racing greyhound! Please get in touch at [public.affairs@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:public.affairs@bluecross.org.uk) to arrange this.

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