

## **INTRODUCTION**

The SAGE Petition to end greyhound racing in Scotland was lodged on 11 September 2019 and was last considered at the ECCLR Committee on 23 February 2021. The committee voted to keep the petition open and was tasked with writing to the Scottish animal welfare commission on the issues raised. We have recently been informed that due to an oversight this letter was not sent.

This paper sets out the current situation with the greyhound racing industry in Scotland and reasons we are seeking a ban.

## **GREYHOUND RACING IN SCOTLAND – CURRENT SITUATION**

At one point there were around 30 greyhound race tracks operating in Scotland. When we lodged our petition in 2019 there were 2 tracks remaining in Scotland – Shawfield in South Glasgow and Thornton in Fife. Now there is one. This in itself clearly evidences the waning interest in the ‘sport’.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Shawfield Stadium, the only Scottish track regulated by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB), closed. It has remained closed since. The buildings, which are already old and dilapidated, have been left unattended for 2 years. We are not aware of any plans for the stadium to be sold or redeveloped, or indeed reopened. If Shawfield does return to greyhound racing the track and facilities would likely require extensive refurbishment. Meanwhile the stadium is a blot on Glasgow’s South Side.

Thornton Stadium was also badly impacted by the pandemic. After restrictions were lifted the stadium reopened but the lack of dogs meant race nights were regularly cancelled. We are extremely concerned that Thornton is now reporting up to 30 dogs running on race nights. Being the last track standing it is likely to have attracted trainers who may previously have raced dogs at Shawfield.

The reason this situation quite frankly terrifies us is that Thornton is not regulated. A Freedom of Information request submitted to Fife Council in October 2021 revealed that Thornton has a “premises licence”. However there have been no inspections for many years. There is no vet on site. No kennel or track inspections. No records kept pertaining to injury or death of dogs. No requirement to keep such records. The dogs racing there are not traceable. No drug testing is carried out. Fife Council directed us to the SSPCA and the Gambling Commission. We are awaiting responses from FOI requests.

The events of the past 2 years have changed the face of greyhound racing in Scotland but if anything we are more in need of legislative action now.

## KEY CONCERNS

**Inherent Track Risks** - The fundamental configuration of an oval and anticlockwise racing track lends itself to repeated stresses on the left fore limb and the right hind limb of the greyhound being made to race. In any race up to six greyhounds are racing at upwards of 40mph, causing collisions between dogs, collisions with the boards around the outside of the track, injuries due to the surface underfoot if the ground is frozen. As long as there is racing of this kind, these risks cannot be mitigated and dogs will continue to suffer horrendous injuries such as loss of limb, neck and spinal fracture and death.

**Injuries and Deaths** – on GBGB registered tracks in the UK, since 2017 when the industry first published data, until the end of 2020 there were **18,345** injuries on UK registered tracks including Shawfield. In this same period the industry was responsible for the deaths of at least **3,066** greyhounds.

UK WIDE	Dog Runs	Injuries	Total Deaths (All Reasons)	Track Fatalities
2017	419,385	4,837	1,013	257
2018	426,139	4,963	932	242
2019	410,607	4,970	710	207
2020* covid-19	318,346	3,575	411	200
Totals	1,574,477	18,345	3,066	906

This information is not broken down by track, however the GBGB was asked directly by the Cross Party Group for Animal Welfare to give specific numbers relating to the only Scottish Registered track. The information given was very limited and only cited injuries and “total

euthanasia”, which presumably does not include for example dogs who died outright on the track or who died due to neglect or illness while in racing kennels.

No specific figures were given in relation to dogs ‘retired ’from racing.

SHAWFIELD	Dog Runs	Injuries	“Total Euthanasia”
2017	6791	70	8
2018	5620	45	2
2019	5597	70	5
2020* covid-19	813	12	0
Totals	18,821	197	15

**Quality of Life** - The life of a racing greyhound is a miserable one. Greyhounds are bred in kennels, and live out their racing days in the kennel environment. One GBGB registered trainer boasted that her dogs got out for three 20 minute exercise breaks per day - thats 23 hours a day in kennels which are often only just large enough to turn in, and can have no electricity or heating. Sadly we believe this to be common practice. In the case of dogs raced in flapper tracks, we know they are often kept in damp garden sheds or outside with limited shelter. With no kennel inspections or minimum requirements for living conditions, we are most concerned about the quality of life for those dogs raced at Thornton track.

At the EECLR Committee on 10th December 2019 Mike Flynn, Superintendent of the SSPCA commented "a dog at one year old and all it's only ever known really is kennels is not a good thing for welfare". The context of this was dogs seized in welfare/cruelty cases and the slow pace of justice. But surely the same applies to greyhounds?

**Doping of dogs** – Drug testing of racing greyhound only occurs at GBGB regulated sites. Once again the data we have available relies upon the industry self-reporting, with the data

suggesting that as **few as 3%** of dog runs are actually drug tested via urine analysis. Despite this, between 2017-20 there were almost **30** instances of dogs racing at Shawfield Stadium being found to have cocaine metabolites, atenolol, steroids and other drugs in their systems – designed to influence the outcome of a race, mask pain, slow down or speed up the animal.

An exposé by the Sunday post in 2016 uncovered the illegal sale and use of illegal substances associated with Thornton track in Scotland. With no drug testing occurring at this track at all, it is expected that the rate of doping will be even higher than that uncovered at Shawfield when it was still operating.

**Traceability of Dogs** – in “flapper tracks” such as Thornton there is no traceability of the dogs raced or transparency relating to what happens to dogs when they are no longer used for racing.

**Current legislation is ineffective** – It is regularly asserted that the current legislation is sufficient to protect greyhounds. We beg to differ with this statement.

The Animal Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 places a duty of care on pet owners and others responsible for animals to ensure that the welfare needs of their animals are met. The “animals needs” being:

- **suitable environment**
- **suitable diet**
- **able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns**
- **to be housed with, or apart from, other animals**
- **to be protected from suffering, injury and disease**

The figures noted above evidence that greyhounds are *subjected to* rather than *protected from* suffering and injury. As stated, there are no such records kept at Thornton, or none that are available to the public. No vet. No inspections. No scrutiny whatsoever.

Imagine the excruciating pain of breaking a leg, or crashing at 40 MPH into a fence. The stress. The suffering. Greyhounds feel pain and emotion. They are **sentient** creatures. Although the 2006 act does not explicitly mention animal sentience, the Scottish Government has voiced a commitment to ensure sentience *is* taken into consideration in animal welfare.

## **CONCLUSION**

We know Thornton Stadium is beginning to see more greyhounds being returned to the racetrack. We also know there is no monitoring of the dogs running at Thornton, or the

conditions they are running in.

We know, as is evidenced above, that injuries and death are common place in greyhound racing. Yet we are aware there is no requirement for a vet to be present at flapper tracks such as Thornton.

We believe the Scottish Government is not only failing greyhounds but is actively condoning a cruel and outdated practice. We believe Scotland is better than that.

**Jacqueline Brown and Gill Docherty**  
**SAGE Founders and Trustees**