

Hot Weather Racing Fact Sheet

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Greyhound Racing NSW

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1. Introduction

GRNSW has produced a set of guidelines relating to greyhound racing in hot weather conditions.

2. Background

It is clear that heat stress affects canines more severely than both humans and some other animals. Canines do not sweat freely like humans and their main form of cooling is through panting. It is not uncommon for canines to die from heat stress and GRNSW has developed this policy to assist clubs and participants to ensure that greyhounds are properly cared for in circumstances of hot weather conditions.

3. Policy

Stewards may allow a greyhound to be withdrawn from an event without penalty where:

- a) The temperature is forecast to be above 38 degrees Celsius; and
- b) A participant has no air conditioning facility available for the transport; or
- c) A participant has a journey exceeding an hour to get to the race track.

Any application for withdrawal without penalty must be made prior to the official scratching time of the race meeting however the stewards may consider late requests.

In exercise of discretion by the Stewards the welfare of the greyhound is paramount. The welfare of the greyhounds will not be compromised regardless of whether a loss in betting turnover might result from a withdrawal.

Where the temperature rises above 40 degrees Celsius or the Stewards are of the opinion that the temperature is likely to rise above 40 degrees Celsius the Stewards may abandon the meeting or a race or races at the meeting.

Kennel/race bay temperatures at tracks:

- The ideal temperature in the racing kennels is between 19 & 22 degrees Celsius.
- If the temperature reaches 24 degrees the veterinarian on duty is to inspect each greyhound after it has been removed from the race kennel and prior to competing in an event. Any greyhound found to be suffering from any signs of heat stress may be permitted to be scratched without penalty.
- If the temperature in the race kennels reaches 26 degrees, the Steward and Veterinarian are to consult with club officials and if the temperature can't be reduced promptly then the upcoming events for that meeting may be abandoned or postponed.

4. Information

- **Travelling to the track and pre-Kennelling**

Participants are urged to ensure that their car or trailer is cool before greyhounds are loaded for transportation. A car can be started and air conditioned prior to leaving. Greyhounds could be hosed or towelled down with water prior to being placed in the car or trailer. When planning transport to the track, it is advisable that the participant arrives as close as possible to the opening time of kennelling.

Participants are urged to provide their greyhounds with adequate water and ice. Fluids should be given to the greyhound before the journey. It is essential to carry adequate water and drinking containers, in case of delay or breakdown during the journey and for arrival on course. Electrolyte intake may also assist the greyhound.

Electrolytes can be given to the greyhound prior to kennelling. However, as dogs maintain core body temperature by panting rather than sweating, they have less exercise induced electrolyte loss. If electrolyte products are used they should be specifically formulated for greyhounds as other animal electrolyte products contain higher concentrations of salt which may be detrimental to the greyhound.

Once on the racetrack, and after the greyhound has been given fluids, it is advised to kennel the greyhound as quickly as possible. The kennels are the coolest place on course and are usually air-conditioned. Clubs are advised that kennel cooling systems should be activated no less than three hours prior to the first race.

Club officials must ensure that their kennels are adequately equipped with cooling or air conditioning systems and that a responsible equipment maintenance strategy is not only adopted but observed. A service check of the air conditioning system should be undertaken no later than October. There are no excuses for not providing for the comfort and welfare of the greyhounds engaged to race at a club's meeting

Clubs are required to have ice, water and extra water hoses or several dual outlet hose apparatus available and connected that allows all contestants quick access to water following a race on days when the temperature may rise above 34 degrees Celsius. They must also monitor closely all greyhounds in the kennels. Thermometers, which are to be visible in a public place, should be on hand to monitor the ambient temperature on the track and within the kennel block, with regular recordings being noted (during the hot season) in a register with the date, time and location (track/kennel). Placement of the thermometer should be chosen to reflect ambient temperature rather than placed in direct sunlight. Should any staff have concerns over the welfare of a kennelled greyhound, he or she must contact the Veterinary officer or Stewards immediately. Barking muzzles are not permitted on hot days as they restrict the ability of a greyhound to pant. The Stewards and/or a Veterinary officer, if in attendance, have the right to remove any muzzle at their discretion.

- **Race time**

Club officials and attendants need to watch the greyhounds urinate. If the urine is very dark or appears to contain blood (an indicator of heat stress) then the greyhound should be subject to an immediate Veterinary examination and may be scratched without penalty, although the Stewards reserve the right to impose a penalty in some circumstances. Thermometers must also be available to race club officials and/or Veterinarians to enable monitoring of the temperature of any greyhound suspected of displaying signs of heat stress.

Club Officials should ensure that greyhounds spend as long as possible in the kennels before start time. Greyhounds should be paraded directly to the boxes, and at the conclusion of the race should be directed immediately to the hosing down/wash bay area. Under no circumstances is a greyhound to be unnecessarily subjected to the heat because of a "Race Presentation" before it has been given the opportunity for a drink and to be cooled down.

- **Post Race**

Offer the greyhound water but do not attempt to force water intake.

Hose the greyhound down immediately. Do not use very cold or ice water as this leads to a reflex constriction of the blood vessels and delayed evaporative cooling. The greyhound should be hosed until it shows signs of a decrease in its panting. It is important to pay attention to hosing the greyhound's feet, chest, back and groin.

Participants are urged to take time in this process as it is vital that the greyhound cools. Give the greyhound a walk around, then re-hose with water, give the greyhound a drink and return to the kennels.

- **Return Journey**

Ensure that the steps you took to cool your vehicle and trailer for the journey to the track are also taken prior to leaving the course. Give your greyhound water, and electrolytes if desired, and make sure you have ample fluids for the greyhound's trip home. The greyhound may be hosed or towelled down prior to being placed in its trailer. The greyhound may be more affected by the heat after its event so it is important to consistently monitor the condition of your greyhounds. Barking muzzles should never be used on greyhounds immediately after a race, as it can prevent the greyhound from panting. Once at home ensure the greyhound has sufficient clean water and is again hosed to cool down. The greyhound could still be affected by the heat so constant monitoring is advisable.

The information listed above is mostly common sense. This policy has been adopted in the best interests, health and welfare of the racing greyhound. All participants must ensure that they are vigilant in taking these extra steps on hot days. Greyhounds are wonderful animals, they provide us with so much enjoyment, to be attentive of their needs in hot weather conditions is an obligation.

GRNSW wishes to thank Dr. Gavin Goble and Dr. Linda Corney for their assistance in relation to the formulation of this policy and the constructive comments provided by the various racing associations. Also Dr. John Newell for his comments on the review of the update to this policy in 2014 and 2015.