



# SIGNS OF ILLNESS AND INJURY ON-TRACK

## FACT SHEET



The signs of some of the illnesses and injuries that occur off-track can sometimes be seen on the track.

In addition, a greyhound's musculoskeletal system - that is the bones, muscles, cartilage, tendons (connecting muscle to bone), ligaments (connecting bone to bone), joints and other connective tissue that binds the tissues and organs together - is subjected to considerable forces as the greyhound accelerates from a standing still position, jostles for position, negotiates bends, and sustains knocks,

bumps and checks to its speed and direction of travel. These forces result in stresses and strains that can cause a range of injuries that are specific to a racing greyhound. Signs of the more common injuries sustained while racing are provided below.

*This fact sheet should be read alongside the following Fact Sheets:*

- *General Treatment Principles and When to Get Help*

- *Signs of a Normal Healthy Greyhound*
- *Signs That Something Is Not Quite Right With Your Greyhound*

*It is important to remember your responsibilities as a registered person. Under GAR 106 (1) (d) you must ensure that greyhounds, which are in the person's care or custody, are provided at all times with veterinary attention when necessary.*

### ILLNESS / INJURY

### SIGNS

#### MUSCLE SORENESS

- Mild to moderate muscle soreness will be seen as increased tone (tension or firmness to the muscle) or slight pain when examined by touching.
- There may be reduced form during a race resulting in the greyhound tailing off or pulling up.

#### MUSCLE TEARS

- There is usually a significant reduction in form during the run when a tear occurs in a major muscle, resulting in the greyhound tailing off, pulling up or failing to finish.
- There may be some stiffness in the greyhound's gait after pulling up and a change in shape to the muscle may be noticed.
- Swelling and bruising may then develop.
- Pain may be present once the greyhound has cooled and the affected muscle is touched or stretched.

*Veterinary advice should be sought, and an appropriate treatment plan put in place, to ensure a swift and full recovery.*

#### TENDON IN-JURIES

- Signs of a tendon injury are dependent upon the specific tendon and the degree of injury sustained.
- The tendons over the bones of the feet and toes are commonly injured.
- Significant swelling or altered shape or structure of the region are common signs noticed.
- There may be subtle limping and pain on pressure over the affected tendon.

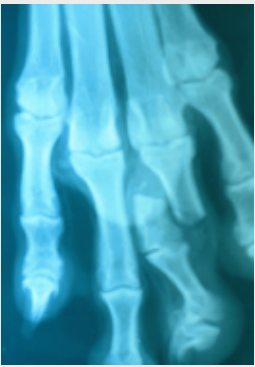
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**LIGAMENT INJURIES**

- Signs are dependent upon the specific ligament and the degree of injury sustained.
- The most common ligament strains/sprains/ruptures involve the toes ('sprung toe'), but stopper ligament and hock ligament sprains can also occur.
- Stopper and hock ligament damage is often accompanied by pain on flexion of the wrist or the hock. If severely injured, significant lameness and even deformation of shape to the area may be seen.

*Veterinary advice should be sought, and an appropriate treatment plan put in place, to ensure a swift and full recovery.*

**BONE STRESS FRACTURES**



- Should be suspected with recurrent lameness off track or once cooled down.
- Careful examination of affected leg reveals an area of tenderness or pain over bone.
- If the injury has been present for some time, with continued running/racing there may be firm swelling (callus) and X-rays may reveal fine fracture lines.
- Metacarpals and metatarsals in the feet, hocks and stopper bones are commonly involved in the development of stress fractures.
- Sometimes stress fractures of the radius, ulna and tibia in the leg are also identified.

*Veterinary advice should be sought, and an appropriate treatment plan put in place, to ensure a swift and full recovery.*

**COMPLETE BONE FRACTURE**

- A clear loss of form, usually after a major collision, is accompanied by lameness and swelling and significant pain.
- Fracture of a major bone usually results in the greyhound pulling up and failing to complete the race/trial. For serious fractures, the greyhound may not be able to stand.
- Fracture of a toe or bone in the foot may see the greyhound complete the race but show obvious lameness off the track. The greyhound may have tailed off during the race.
- Swelling, bruising, deformation of shape, pain on touching and the presence of crepitus (grating of bone on bone) are demonstrated.
- **Veterinary assessment and treatment MUST be provided.**

**ACIDOSIS**

- Stiffness and reluctance to move or run. Soreness when muscles (especially in saddle and lumbar region) are touched.
- The greyhound may be reluctant to get off its bedding or rise up onto its bedding.
- Cases may be complicated by concurrent water diabetes syndrome, dehydration, electrolyte imbalances and cramping.

*Veterinary attention is necessary with appropriate fluid therapy and analgesics.*

## WATER DIABETES SYNDROME

- Drinking and urinating excessively post-race or post-trial. In some instances, up to 4+ litres of water per day can be consumed (normal water intake for a greyhound in less than 1 litre/day).
- Excessive drinking and urinating may be accompanied by stiffness and dragging of one or more limbs, which is secondary to an electrolyte imbalance.
- In severe cases, dogs may collapse and be severely dehydrated, especially if water is not provided freely.
- Occasionally stiffness and dehydration can occur without the dog drinking excessively.

*Veterinary advice and attention should be sought, and appropriate treatment, commenced as soon as signs are noticed.*

## TRACK LEG

- Usually swelling on the inner part of the left tibia (bone between hock and stifle/knee) secondary to the greyhound striking the area with the outside point of the elbow on the same side.
- In the acute (early) phase of the injury there may be apparent bruising of the area.
- With repeat episodes, a sac of fluid may develop at the site of the affected area.
- Continued striking of the region often leads to a firm thickening of the skin at the affected area.
- Occasionally the force of the repeated glancing blows may cause splitting of the skin on the inside of the shin.

## CRAMPING

- Suspected when a greyhound's performance suddenly drops off during a race/trial and no obvious injury is detected upon examination.
- The greyhound may be heard to cry out during the race/trial and a short-ened stride may be observed, particularly in later part of the run.
- May be stiff in one or more legs in the catching pen, may pull up and fail to complete the race/trial or fall over and be unable to rise until the cramp has passed.
- Affected muscles will feel very hard when touched but only while the cramp is still active. They may also appear hard or solid.
- The greyhound may be observed to be dragging or holding up the affected leg while the cramp is still active but then walk off relatively normally after the cramp passes.

