



# SIGNS OF A HEALTHY GREYHOUND FACT SHEET



Being able to pick up subtle signs that your greyhound may be injured or unwell, is easiest if you know what 'normal' is. Knowing your greyhound is essential to noticing changes that may require further attention. Some of the characteristics of a normal, healthy greyhound are detailed below.



SIGNS OF A NORMAL, HEALTHY GREYHOUND

## ATTRIBUTE

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A NORMAL STATE

### GENERAL APPEARANCE

- An upright stance with erect elevated neck and level head.
- Back level with well-developed and even muscle mass along the trunk, shoulders and legs.
- Legs well-proportioned with even muscle development and a good, even range of motion in all joints (comparing one side with the opposite side).
- Stands evenly on all four legs.

### BODY CONDITION

- Varies with age, stage of development, and stage of training.
- Should not be underweight or overweight:
- Puppies are well conditioned.
- Race dogs should be well muscled and display 3-4 ribs with just a hint of spine and pin bones showing.
- Breeding animals usually carry slightly more condition than race dogs.
- Muscle definition should be evident (varies from puppyhood through to rac-ing age) and be even on both sides of the greyhound.
- Should remain relatively constant throughout each stage of development.
- *Refer to Fact Sheet: Body Condition Scorecard.*

### WEIGHT

- Weight gain should be progressive through rearing and the greyhound should maintain a relatively constant body condition score.

**APPETITE**

- Usually very good, readily consuming all food offered.
- Some animals eat more slowly, but all food offered is usually consumed.
- Rarely but sometimes, a greyhound will not eat certain foods.
- Knowing what food an individual greyhound does and does not like is important.
- Some greyhounds will show significant food guarding behaviour.

**DRINKING**

- Water consumption should be relatively constant and may vary slightly depending upon the water content of the food provided and ambient temperature.
- Feeding dry food will result in increased water consumption.
- Hot weather will usually increase water consumption.
- Exercise should not increase overall daily water consumption.
- Sudden changes in water consumption, especially where it increases, is usually a sign of disease.

**URINATION**

- Urination should be habitual and regular.
- Initiation of urination should be without effort, with a good, steady flow rate.
- Territorial marking behaviour is usually more frequent, with smaller volumes passed and urination is without strain or effort.

**DEFAECATION**

- Passing stools should be habitual and regular.
- Stool colour and consistency should be regular, well formed, and maintain shape on the ground once passed.
- Diet changes can cause changes in stool colour and consistency.
- No visible presence of worms in faeces.

**SKIN**

- Hair and coat should be smooth and glossy with minimal dandruff.
- Hair and coat vary in density between individuals; knowing what your greyhound's coat normally looks like is important.
- Thinning of the hair and coat, especially on the thighs is common.
- You can assess your greyhound's hydration level by picking up the skin; when the greyhound is hydrated the skin should spring back to flat position quickly and readily.

**EYES**

- Clear cornea (front surface of the eye); bright reflective yellow/golden iris; pupils should be equally sized, black and readily responsive to light. Pupils should constrict in bright sunlight and become more dilated in dimmer light.
- Should be bright alert and inquisitive and observe surroundings responsively.
- White part of the eye (sclera) should be white, with only fine blood vessels evident on the surface.
- There should be no discharge.

## EARS

- Ear flaps should be thin, well haired, folded over and should readily prick up in response to noises.
- Skin on the inner side of the ear flap should be thin, smooth and a light pale pink colour.
- Ear canal should be wide, clear of any wax, dirt or exudate/ discharge and the skin should be pale pink.

## MOUTH

- Lips and jowls should be equal with no signs of thickening or swelling. Skin should be thin and glistening.
- Gums and the mouth lining (mucosa) should be pink with no signs of redness or swelling. Some dogs will show areas of darker spots. The surface of the gums and mouth lining should be moist and glistening.
- Teeth should be white with minimal or no tartar accumulation and the gum-tooth margins should not be reddened, thickened or inflamed.
- Teeth should be located side by side or be close to each other well. Greyhounds with an undershot (shorter) lower jaw may have canine teeth that do not sit properly relative to their other teeth.

## RESPONSIVENESS

- Usually alert, active, responsive, and relatively boisterous animals.
- Usually rise from resting when approached.
- Inquisitive and observe movement.
- Readily respond to and turn towards sound.
- Usually reactive to other animals and people.

## GAIT (MOVEMENT)

- **At a walk;** there should be even weight placed on all four legs during the weight bearing part of the stride with equal amounts of time spent weight bearing on each leg. The head should be level and remain so during all phases of the stride (allowing for movements associated with observation and responses to sound or visual cues).
- **At a trot;** the limbs move lightly, evenly and gracefully over the ground with the back level and straight. Even weight is placed on the ground by each limb in the loading part of the stride. Forward reach of both the front legs and the back legs should be equal to its opposite leg.
- **At a canter;** the stride is such that there is a 'flight' component to the stride with the animal being airborne for a part of the stride. The motion should be fluid with some back arching and even weight bearing during the ground phase of the stride.
- **At a gallop;** the fastest stride, there is a ground-based phase and a flight phase to the stride.



- The normal body temperature of a greyhound is officially between 37.5 and 39.5°C.
- Immediately after racing the rectal temperature may be as high as 41.5°C, although this should return to around 39°C within a few minutes.
- Just prior to whelping a females' temperature will drop below 38°C.

## RESPIRATORY RATE

- Resting respiratory rate in a relaxed greyhound is usually around 22-26 breaths per minute.
- A greyhound's respiratory rate increases with excitement, stress, exercise and increased environmental temperature.
- The increase respiratory rate helps meet the increased demand for oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange within the body, as well as help eliminate some of the heat produced from the working muscles.