

Care and husbandry in the breeding environment

Breeder Booklet No. 4



This is the fourth in a series of booklets developed to support the successful breeding of racing greyhounds.

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Thinking about breeding greyhounds

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Developing a breeding program - understanding genetics

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Preparation for breeding

Although it seems obvious, the daily keep and care of your greyhounds has an enormous effect on your success as a breeder.

Breeding greyhounds need to be happy and healthy, in good body condition, and free from parasites and disease if they are going to fall pregnant, give birth, and raise a successful litter.

There are plenty of resources on basic dog care, but minimum accepted standards are covered in the *Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Dogs*, and the *Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses*. There is also the *Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds*. These are freely available from the DEDJTR website - www.vic.gov.au/pets.



Cleaning and hygiene

Cleanliness and hygiene are very important. Dirty, soiled living areas promote disease and parasites, and can quickly lead to sick greyhounds.

This means that all greyhounds must have their cages, pens or enclosures cleaned at least once a day. This includes picking up any faeces, cleaning and filling water and food containers, and removing used or soiled bedding. All items used for feeding need to be cleaned at the end of each feeding time, and uneaten food needs to be thrown away. This ensures that disease cannot develop in the leftover food that might be stuck to the bowl.

At least once a week, the feed bowls, utensils, water containers and enrichment toys need to be disinfected. A dishwasher is a good way of disinfecting, but the dishwasher cycle must be run at a minimum temperature of 65°C, using appropriate dishwashing detergent according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Speak to your veterinarian about a suitable disinfectant, and make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions. Disinfected items need to be rinsed



thoroughly, particularly if they are to be used for food or water. Disinfection of pens, cages, modules, and other enclosures also need to occur weekly, and the disinfectant you use for this may be different.

Dog food needs to be stored in such a way that it does not spoil, and pests cannot access it. Pests can transmit diseases and can ruin food supplies so keeping your property pest free is important in helping to keep all your greyhounds healthy.

Comfort and security

All greyhounds that you keep need to feel safe and secure. If you are housing them together in groups, you need to make sure that they are getting along with each other.

If greyhounds are not compatible, they need to be quickly separated and moved to alternate accommodation to prevent fighting or unhealthy levels of anxiety. Generally, this is something that you will only notice with close observation. You need to make time to watch the interactions between greyhounds that are housed together and have an idea of what the normal behaviour for each of them is.

Things to ask yourself include (but are not limited to):

- Do you feel that the interactions that you are seeing are appropriate?
- Are you seeing repeated fighting between the same dogs?
- Are some greyhounds behaving differently?

Greyhounds that are stressed or anxious may hide, may have loose faeces, may not eat, and may not move around the pen in the way you would expect.

It is normal greyhound behaviour for occasional disputes over resources to occur, or for greyhounds to occasionally assert themselves as part of the inter-animal hierarchy, but these should be brief altercations

that only occur from time to time. Youngsters need to be taught the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, but they must not be constantly bullied or hurt.

Greyhounds being introduced to a group, or re-introduced after time away, may take a little time to settle in but should appear otherwise relaxed and should be eating, drinking and toileting normally.

Enclosures and pens need to be set up to allow all greyhounds space away from others. If you observe the same dog or dogs involved in 'disputes' all the time, or you have dogs who are getting injured, then you will need to step in and separate these greyhounds, and either house them on their own, or house them with other, more compatible, dogs. Separating greyhounds during feeding times and at night are important times to minimise the risk of disputes.

All greyhounds need to have access to comfortable and warm sleeping and resting areas and be protected from variable climatic conditions.

Preventative health care and management

Part of good husbandry is having a preventative health care plan for all animals you house. Prevention is always better than cure!

Preventative health care includes all animals having regular, scheduled health checks with your veterinarian. As they get older additional veterinary checks may be required such as scheduled teeth cleaning to ensure good oral health or blood tests to screen for developing problems.

All breeders must have a vaccination program for all of their greyhounds, along with worming and parasite prevention strategies. Preventative health care must be documented and include records of when treatments or vaccinations are due.

It is recommended you sit down with your veterinarian to discuss and document matters such as:

- assessing greyhounds before they become part of your breeding program;
- diet and nutrition during the breeding, pregnancy and whelping lifecycle phases;
- vaccination, worming and parasite control programs;
- responses to outbreaks of disease and quarantine procedures for sick or new greyhounds;
- appropriate environmental enrichment and socialisation for pups;
- hygiene, cleaning and disinfection programs;
- assessment for suitability for breeding;
- retirement planning and de-sexing programs for ex-breeding greyhounds;
- behavioural and welfare assessments and indicators.



It is useful to review any plans you have every year and amend them to make sure it remains relevant and up to date with current scientific knowledge. It may be that after an issue arises, for example a delivery issue during whelping, different arrangements are put in place around contacting a veterinarian. Your health management needs to evolve over time to make sure both you and your veterinarian are doing everything possible to ensure healthy and disease-free greyhounds.

Your veterinarian can also answer other questions you might have regarding your breeding program or can tell you where to find the information that you need.

Disease control and quarantine

All breeders need to have a plan for new greyhounds coming into their program.

Some diseases only become evident after an initial 'incubation period'. Vaccinations only cover greyhounds against the main diseases (especially Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus and Kennel Cough) but don't cover against every other disease a greyhound could get. In addition, because Kennel Cough can be caused by a large number of infectious agents, and the vaccination only covers the most common causes, vaccinated greyhounds can still get Kennel Cough. Most new animals should be housed separately for a period of time, observed for any serious diseases, and only once the new animal is cleared, be introduced to other dogs.

Even with the best care and prevention, it is still possible for an unexpected disease outbreak to occur. It may be that dogs or people that have travelled off your property have been exposed to disease, or it may be a new disease outbreak in your area. Excellent hygiene, early detection of disease, and immediate quarantine of affected greyhounds may help prevent the spread of disease, but you should have a plan to then deal with a break-out.



Discuss your approach with your veterinarian and document it so that you know what to do in the case of an outbreak. You must also have a documented procedure for isolating greyhounds that are of unknown disease status, who are new to your breeding program, or who are showing signs of disease. Some breeders will have the facilities to isolate infectious greyhounds, but others will need to have an agreement with their veterinarian who may be able to provide isolation and treatment facilities.

Basic first aid

Where your local veterinarian is fairly close by, getting your greyhound safely in the car and to the veterinarian (or having the veterinarian travel to you) should be your number one priority. Bandaging, splinting or dressing an injury is a temporary measure and you do not want to put your greyhound through unnecessary pain and stress by spending a lot of time doing this. Nor do you want to delay treatment. That is not to say that keeping a wound clean, keeping a lame leg still, or using pressure to stop bleeding should not be done, but be very conscious about delaying proper veterinary treatment. The most important thing to note is that the biggest 'danger' to the animal first aider is getting bitten or scratched - so be careful.

If your greyhound is injured, you will need to make a quick assessment of the seriousness of the injury. You should then decide whether or not you are going to immediately transport it to the veterinarian, and if so you should ring ahead to let them know you are coming. Having the contact details of the local veterinarian as well as the local after-hours practice or emergency centre displayed in a prominent place is very important in a situation like this.

You will need to approach the greyhound carefully and try to restrict its movement whilst preparing it for travel. If you are dealing with a greyhound that cannot walk, you may have to gently move it onto a blanket or towel, then use the blanket or towel like a stretcher. Try to move carefully so that you don't make any injuries worse. Where there is obvious bleeding, you should try to apply some gentle pressure to the area to stop the bleeding. This may be as simple as holding and pressing with your fingers or hand with a clean towel or pad.

If the injury is not a serious one - you may choose to apply some simple first aid measures yourself. If there is a small wound, you can flush it, and then apply an antiseptic to the area. Saline solution is safest for flushing and cleaning wounds as it does not sting and is safe if the animal decides to lick the area. You should consult with your veterinarian before using anything on your greyhound's skin that could be toxic if put in their mouth, as they are naturally going to lick at an injury.

You will still need to document the injury, and any treatment given. Your greyhound will need to be monitored closely to ensure infection and other complications do not develop, or other complications occur. Where a veterinarian has prescribed medication, you must clearly record when and who has given each dose. This will prevent greyhounds from being double-dosed or missing a dose.



Your veterinarian will be able to suggest items for your first aid kit and will be able to show you some simple first aid techniques that you can apply if needed.



Remember that injuries that involve, ears and eyes, or injuries to pregnant females or young pups may be more serious than you expect.

You must consult your veterinarian for advice.

There are a wide range of **Injury and Illness Management Fact Sheets** that can assist you. These can be found at <https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/injury-and-illness-management/>.

