

GREYHOUND RACING

VICTORIA

Attending and Training Greyhounds

Booklet 11 – Preparing a Greyhound for Re-Homing



Greyhound Racing Victoria
Attendant and Trainer Education Pack

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Date Published 2019

This is the eleventh in a series of booklets that support you in attending and training racing greyhounds.

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Preparing a greyhound for re-homing

11.1 What happens to a greyhound when racing or breeding career is over?

Most greyhounds finish their racing career by the age of 3-5 years. As the average natural lifespan of a greyhound is 10-15 years, this means that they still have plenty of good years still in them and most will make great pets. **It is important that a plan is put in place early on in relation to re-homing options at the end of the greyhounds racing career.** Many owners or trainers will keep the greyhound themselves as a pet or will re-home the greyhound to a family member or friend.

Importance of early socialisation

Providing a greyhound with experiences outside of the racing environment early on in its life, and throughout its racing career, is likely to increase the greyhound's ability to transition easily to life as a pet. Increased socialisation at the conclusion of a greyhound's racing career is very important, however, this should build on experiences already undertaken throughout the greyhound's life and during a number of key periods.

Primary Socialisation Period: the first part of rearing that is critical to success is

what is commonly called the 'socialisation' or 'critical learning' period, which occurs at approximately 3-20 weeks of age. Learning continues beyond this but happens more slowly.

Greyhounds need to be exposed (in a positive manner) to as wide a range of stimuli as possible at this age, including dedicated periods of human and other animal contact and socialisation (i.e. not limited to feeding time). Unfortunately, what is learnt can be forgotten, so ongoing socialisation and exposure to various situations throughout their lifetime is required.

Fear Impact Periods: greyhounds are particularly sensitive to fear during two key periods of their life, commonly around 8-10 weeks of age and 9-10 months of age (but may also occur outside of these times). During these periods, greyhounds are prone to developing excessive fear of something that they have had a bad experience with. This can develop into generalised fear where they become timid about many things, or a 'nervous wreck'. These greyhounds can become aggressive in some circumstances (commonly 'fear biting') and present challenges when it comes to re-homing.

It is important to identify fear periods with each puppy (if they occur) and take active steps to prevent negative experiences, as well as appropriate and positive training to rectify these behaviours if they arise. A veterinarian or other qualified animal behaviour expert can assist with training and support in this area.



to success is offering as much information as possible. This allows the adopter to



11.2 Wind down period and preparation for re-homing

GRV recommends that greyhounds undertake at least a 28-day wind down period from all race related activities to give the greyhound the best chance to successfully transition into a pet life. While this is the minimum wind down period required for a greyhound to be accepted into the Victorian Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP), preparation for re-homing will ideally take at least eight weeks.

The wind down period is also mentioned in Victorian Local Racing Rule 42.6 (LR 42.6) that requires greyhounds undertake a 28-day wind down period before an owner can consider euthanasia (unless the greyhound is suffering from a serious medical condition). Please note that a greyhound can be re-homed at any time during the wind down period if a suitable home is found. It is however recommended that the new owner be informed that the greyhound has not undertaken a full wind down period.

It is important to strive for a successful adoption from the beginning and the key

clearly understand what their new greyhound might be like and what they will need during their transition to pet life.

Housing

During a wind down period, greyhounds should be provided with at least 15 square metres (preferably some of it grassed) to allow for self-exercise and play during the day. This will provide the greyhound with the opportunity to get used to larger spaces that are similar to those they will experience in a new home as a pet.

Feeding and weight

During a wind down period the greyhound's diet should be adjusted to allow some weight gain over and above its optimal racing weight. The amount of weight gain will vary depending on the individual greyhound; but will be on average at least two kilograms during the wind down period. You should speak to

your veterinarian for guidance or if you have any concerns.

Veterinary check and de-sexing

To assist in preparing your greyhound for re-homing, a veterinary check should be undertaken to identify if they are carrying any lasting racing injuries or health conditions which require short or long-term treatment. Their teeth should be cleaned, and toe nails trimmed. The greyhound should also have a current C5 vaccination, and up to date parasite treatment.

It is highly recommended that your greyhound is de-sexed as soon as possible after the decision to retire has been made, and prior to re-homing. De-sexed dogs living in the community cost significantly less to register with local council and some local councils have mandatory de-sexing orders in place which means the greyhound could not be registered until it is de-sexed. In addition, there is some evidence that shows that de-sexing can reduce a greyhound's tendency to show undesirable behaviours; such as, being overly boisterous and low-level aggression towards other dogs. De-sexing also has important health benefits including a reduction in the chances of developing some reproductive cancers, and in male dogs, prostate issues.

Developing pet life skills in your greyhound

Pet life skill training is about teaching your greyhound how to relax and positively engage with the environments, individuals, animals and sounds that they will encounter as a pet. These encounters are often new and can be a little overwhelming for your greyhound at first.



It is important that all experiences are provided in as positive a manner as possible; and at a pace that your greyhound is comfortable with. This pace will depend on the individual greyhound. Repeated exposure to situations which may cause stress, fear or aggression may make your greyhound's behaviour worse.

Exercise and socialisation

Exercise remains an important part of the greyhound's life during the wind down period and preparation for re-homing. During the wind down period, exercise should be slowly decreased.

Socialisation is about getting your greyhound used to life in a family. Life in a family often involves interactions with a small number of people frequently, a large number of people infrequently, small and medium dogs, cats and other animals, loud noises and multiple noise sources. Pet dogs also often spend time on their own, without humans or other dogs for company, while most greyhounds will have been in the company of other greyhounds during their racing life.

The greyhound should have a minimum of 60 minutes exercise and socialisation daily. This could consist of combinations of the following activities:

- gentle exercise daily in an area containing natural daylight;

- walking on a leash;
- exposure to people through handling and play; exposure to different environmental stimuli such as toys, chew/food toys, bones etc.

Other great socialisation activities include:

- exposure to different flooring surfaces such as carpet, concrete, tiles, wood floors, bricks and stairs;
- exposure to people in a non-training/racing setting such as play time or professional obedience training;
- travelling inside a car (properly secured) as opposed to in a dog trailer;
- exposure to small dogs and other larger dogs (the greyhound should be muzzled, on leash and under the control of a responsible adult at all times with the interaction immediately ceased if the greyhound shows signs of undesirable behaviour including barking, lunging, growling, snapping or stalking).

Remember, if you are exposing a greyhound to other dogs, animals and young children, this should be in a controlled environment and in as positive a way as possible.

Noises

Exposure to noises should, initially, be done in an environment where your greyhound feels safe and secure. It may be useful to play noise exposure CDs to greyhounds in a kennel environment, or to expose your greyhound to sounds and noises from the safety of a crate. However, if your greyhound has never been crated, you will need to spend some time training them to feel comfortable and safe in the crate. If your greyhound shows signs of distress when exposed to

unfamiliar noises, please contact a pet dog trainer for advice.



Isolation

Most pet dogs experience periods of isolation from humans or other animals. To determine how well your greyhound copes with isolation experiences, you should slowly introduce them to short, positive periods of isolation increasing to longer times (2-3 hours) if they are coping well. If at any time your greyhound becomes distressed and appears to be putting itself in danger, you should stop the isolation exercises and seek help to develop a training plan for this behaviour.

Begin with 10-20 minutes' isolation from humans and other animals daily with toys or food rewards, if the greyhound appears to be coping well increase to 40-60 minutes every second day with toys or food rewards, increasing to 2-3 hours.

Handling and basic pet skills

Handling is about providing your greyhound with positive interactions with humans and other animals in a controlled environment. Only allow your leashed and muzzled greyhound to meet new animals or people when they are calm and

relaxed; and can approach on a loose leash. If your greyhound shows signs of predatory or aggressive behaviour including barking, lunging, growling, snapping or stalking, or signs of distress such as withdrawal or avoidance, you should immediately remove them from the area. Seek help from an expert (animal/veterinary behaviourist or qualified dog trainer).

Most greyhounds will have learnt basic handling and pet skills well before retirement; such as appropriate toilet training. If your greyhound has not been toilet trained, this training should occur during the wind-down period. Further pet skills that the greyhound should be taught include:

- staying calm when washed;
- not jumping up on people;
- not to push through doors;
- learning to come when called.

If you require any advice on how to best teach your greyhound pet skills, you are welcome to contact GAP on 03 5799 0166 for information.

11.3 Re-homing greyhounds with prey drive - maintaining the reputation of the breed as a great pet

Prey drive refers to an animal's natural desire to chase and kill prey animals for food. This exists in many animals and all breeds of dogs, but in dogs is more evident in sight hounds (including greyhounds). Prey drive is also referred to as 'predatory behaviour' or 'predation', and mostly occurs when the dog is relaxed

and in a positive mental state.



If a greyhound doesn't recognise a small dog as being a dog (sometimes due to inadequate early socialisation), it may see the other dog as prey animal and exhibit predatory behaviour towards it (called 'dog-on-dog predation').

The GAP Pre-entry Assessment is designed primarily to detect predatory behaviour towards small dogs. Only those greyhounds showing minimal or manageable predatory behaviour towards small dogs will pass the GAP Pre-entry Assessment. Similarly, greyhounds (like many dogs) may display predatory behaviour towards other small animals such as cats or chickens.

Greyhounds can be taught to recognise these animals as fellow pets and not prey, but this may take some time and require careful introductions using a muzzle. While a greyhound may be well behaved with other pets that it knows well, it can show predatory behaviour towards other unfamiliar small animals in different environments, such as at the park.

Prey drive is a very different behaviour to aggression which is usually anxiety or fear-based; where the dog is in a negative mental state. In the cases the aggression

is a protective mechanism.

Prey drive is not related to chase motivation.

Chase motivation is the desire to chase an object that is not an animal. Some greyhounds with strong chase motivation can be very safe with small dogs (i.e. low levels of predatory behaviour towards small dogs), while some quiet greyhounds, who do not chase the lure well, can show high levels of predatory behaviour towards small dogs. Many GAP greyhounds have had high career winnings, which proves they are good chasers, but understand that a small dog is one of their own species and that they should not exhibit predatory behaviour towards it.

If you wish to undertake your own re-homing efforts, it is important to have a good understanding of your greyhound's level of prey drive. This is particularly important now the legal requirement for greyhounds to wear muzzles in public was removed on 1 January 2019. Dog-on-dog predation is difficult to predict without testing your greyhound in a relaxed environment with an unfamiliar small dog.

Assessing for prey drive

GRV recommends that all greyhounds being re-homed in addition to being wound down for at least 28 days (mandatory for greyhounds being assessed for GAP) have a proper small dog assessment before they move to their new pet home. While the GAP Pre-entry Assessment is usually for greyhounds being entered into GAP, if you would like a temperament assessment done for a greyhound going to a private home, please contact GAP and an assessment (called a PetCheck) may be arranged. If

the greyhound shows moderate or high levels of predatory behaviour, an experienced GAP Assessor will be able to provide information about further training and how to best manage the behaviour.



For further information about the GAP assessments, please phone (03) 5799 0166.

If you decide to make an assessment of your greyhound's prey drive yourself, you need to introduce your greyhound to an unfamiliar small dog and observe the greyhound's behaviour. This must be done safely by ensuring that your greyhound is muzzled and held on a leash at all times during the meeting. If the greyhound displays any of the behaviours below, you should cease the assessment immediately. Please contact GAP if you would like any information or advice because GAP staff are very experienced with predatory behaviour in greyhounds. Signs of predatory behaviour include:

- an upright stiff tail that is wagging quickly;
- intensely staring at the small dog with a stiff body position;
- stalking;
- teeth chattering or drooling;
- hovering above or over the shoulder/neck of the small dog;
- jumping at, or pouncing on, the small dog;
- lunging;

- nose bumping or pawing at the small dog;
- barking at the small dog;
- chasing the small dog;
- attempting to grab (bite) the small dog.

Greyhounds that are safe with small dogs:

- will appear calm with their tail relaxed or wagging loosely;
- will show friendly interest in the small dog (like a normal greeting of two dogs in the park);
- will be easily distracted by the handler; and
- will be polite and calm towards the small dog.



Even if your greyhound shows moderate or high levels of predatory behaviour, this does not mean that it will be unsuitable for re-homing. They can still make a great pet in the right home, but there are a few things to remember:

1. You must inform the person adopting your greyhound that the greyhound has a level of prey drive that will need to be managed in public and around small dogs and/or other small animals. This discussion should occur before the adoption takes place to enable the potential new owner to decide whether the greyhound is right for their circumstances (for example, they may have a cat); and

2. You must remind all adopters that they should consider muzzling the greyhound while in public and legally must keep the greyhound on a leash. While the muzzling requirement for (non-GAP) pet greyhounds was removed by the Victorian Government from 1 January 2019, the leashing law for greyhounds remains in place. Adopters of greyhounds that have prey drive should be strongly encouraged to fit the greyhound with a muzzle while in public and/or if in the presence of small dogs or other small animals, despite there now being no legal requirement.

It is important to the sustainability of the sport that pet greyhounds with prey drive are carefully managed through appropriate muzzling and leashing.

GRV re-homing support package

GRV has released a re-homing support package to assist participants in privately re-homing retired greyhounds. The package contains all of the information outlined above and comprises of the following guides (available at <https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/rehoming/>)

The Re-homing Guide - Information for Participants, provides important and practical information to assist participants with re-homing their greyhounds. This guide includes information about preparing your greyhound for re-homing, the wind down period and the requirements once a new owner is found.



The Re-homing Guide - Information for New Owners has been developed for participants to pass onto the new owner of the greyhound. The guide includes a form for participants to complete that will ensure that all relevant information about the specific greyhound (including any health and/or behaviour issues) is passed onto the new owner, along with helpful information about caring for a greyhound and all legal requirements relating to pet greyhound ownership.

11.4 Re-homing options

A common place for a retired greyhound to be re-homed is through friends and family of owners, trainers and contacts of other participants within the industry. Many owners will choose to keep the greyhound themselves as a pet. GRV encourages owners and trainers to think carefully about re-homing options when first acquiring a greyhound.

Local and specialist greyhound re-homing agencies can also assist with re-homing.

If the owner is unable to re-home the greyhound themselves, they may seek to admit the greyhound to GAP (short for Greyhound Adoption Program or Greyhounds as Pets, depending on the state). The Victorian Greyhound Adoption Program is an initiative of Greyhound

Racing Victoria dedicated to assisting participants to find homes for greyhounds that are no longer suitable for racing.

The Victorian GAP

Greyhounds that are adopted via the Victorian GAP undergo a thorough temperament assessment to ensure that they are safe around small dogs and that they are safe to go un-muzzled in public with a new pet owner.

GRV participants and owners of GRV greyhounds do not have automatic assurance of entry into GAP. The program is provided to owners as a support mechanism only. GAP represents only a proportion of the re-homing efforts required by GRV participants under the Local Rules of Racing. GRV requires all owners to take responsibility for re-homing their greyhounds at the end of their racing career.

To gain admission to GAP, greyhounds must first pass the **GAP Pre-Entry Assessment**. The Pre-entry Assessment primarily assesses the greyhound's behaviour around small dogs and sociability towards people.

To be eligible for a **Pre-Entry Assessment**, the greyhound must not have undertaken any race-related activities for at least 28 days prior to the assessment date (i.e. a 28-day wind down). All greyhounds must also be vaccinated to the following requirements at least 10 days before the Pre-Entry Assessment (ask your veterinarian or contact GRV if you require clarification):

- **C3 vaccination** (Parvovirus, Distemper and Hepatitis) within the last 2½ years (or within 1 year if the last C3 was given earlier than

- 12 months of age); and
- **Kennel Cough vaccination** (both *Bordetella* and Parainfluenza) within the last 6 months where the *Bordetella* component is given as an intra-nasal or oral vaccine. *Note that while the intra-nasal Kennel Cough vaccine protects against both Bordetella and Parainfluenza, the oral vaccine only protects against Bordetella. Therefore, if using the oral vaccine, the Parainfluenza vaccine will have to have been given by separate injection (either on its own or as part of a C4 vaccine).*

Participants may book a **Pre-Entry Assessment** by calling GRV on (03) 8329 1100 or emailing gapbooking@grv.org.au.

A greyhound that **PASSES** the **Pre-Entry Assessment** will be admitted to the program and will undertake a full temperament test at the GAP facility.

A greyhound that **DOES NOT PASS** the **Pre-Entry Assessment** will remain with the participant, but still has many options available including the opportunity to be re-assessed at a later date, after further wind down and socialisation. GAP will talk to you about your options at the assessment.

When a greyhound passes the Pre-entry Assessment, then successfully completes the full GAP assessment, it will be de-sexed (if not done already) and made available for adoption with a GAP Green Collar.

When a greyhound passes the Pre-entry Assessment but is unsuccessful during the full GAP assessment, and/or is deemed unsuitable for a GAP Green Collar, it will not be made available for adoption via

GAP. In this case the owner may be encouraged to take the greyhound back and undertake further socialisation and training to prepare the greyhound for re-homing.

11.5 Local Rule 42.6 Minimum requirements for re-homing

Local Racing Rule 42.6 requires owners to undertake specific minimum re-homing attempts and to provide a minimum of 28 days wind down from racing relating activities before making any decision to euthanase a healthy greyhound.

Euthanasia of a healthy greyhound must be the absolute last resort and non-compliance with LR 42.6 is a Serious Offence.

The 28-day wind down from racing related activities

To give greyhounds the best chance to be successfully re-homed after racing, LR 42.6 requires that all greyhounds undertake a minimum wind down period of 28 days from racing related activities (including breaking, education, trialing, training or racing). During this period, owners should undertake activities (as outlined at section 12.2 above) that help prepare the greyhound for transition to life as a pet or arrange for such activities to occur (i.e. with the trainer). The wind down period should help an owner or trainer to understand the type of pet home the greyhound may be most suitable for.

More information is available in GRV's *Racing to Retirement Guide* and the *Re-homing Guide - Information for Participants*. These guides include

retirement and re-homing checklists and can be found here:

<https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/retirement-from-racing/> and

<https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/rehoming>



A greyhound can be re-homed at any time during the wind down period. As such, if a new home is already arranged for the greyhound, that greyhound may be retired and re-homed immediately following its last race or any other racing related activities; or if a home is found during the wind down period, the greyhound can be re-homed before the 28 days is up. The purpose of imposing a mandatory wind down period is to provide greyhounds at the end of their racing career with the best chance of being re-homed.



Genuine efforts to re-home

Following the 28-day wind down period, owners are required to make specific genuine re-homing attempts before making any decision to euthanase.

Under LR 42.6, owners must make at least one genuine attempt of each of the following re-homing options before making any decision to euthanase (in addition to the 28-day wind down period):

- a) seek to re-home the greyhound with at least **two appropriate third parties**; and
- b) seek the greyhound's admission to the **Greyhound Adoption Program**; and
- c) seek to re-home the greyhound through at least one **other re-homing or rescue agency**.

The aim is to successfully re-home the greyhound, and re-homing attempts can be completed in any order.

Detailed records of re-homing attempts must be kept and must be provided to GRV upon request.

Notice of Intention to Euthanase

The final part of LR 42.6 is the Notice of Intention to Euthanase (NoI). Where all attempts at re-homing are unsuccessful, and a decision to euthanase is made, an owner must submit a NoI (preferably via FastTrack) at least 14 days BEFORE carrying out the euthanasia. The NoI on FastTrack requires the owner to certify that they have undertaken the wind down period and made all the required attempts to re-home their greyhound. The wind down activities must continue throughout the NoI period.

Failure to submit a NoI or comply with the mandatory 14 day waiting period after submitting it is a Serious Offence. If, after submitting the NoI, the owner wants to trial or race their greyhound, the NoI should be cancelled before commencing training to trial or race. When the greyhound is ready to be retired again, the owner will need to commence the retirement process from the beginning.

Medical exemption from re-homing and NoI requirements

If a greyhound is suffering from a **serious medical condition** (illness or injury) **that causes significant pain or discomfort, or a marked reduction in quality of life**, the owner may be exempt from the wind down, re-homing and NoI requirements of the rule. If seeking a medical exemption, the owner must obtain certification from a registered veterinarian using the GRV Euthanasia Certificate. This certificate contains the certification required by a veterinarian under LR42.6(e) and is the only euthanasia certificate that will be accepted by GRV in support of a medical exemption. A copy of this certificate can be downloaded from the Care and Standards website.

Behavioural exemption from re-homing requirements

If a registered veterinarian certifies that a greyhound is **displaying significant behavioural characteristics that negatively impact on its suitability as a pet**, including aggression towards humans or other animals, the owner may apply for an exemption from the re-homing requirements of LR 42.6.

The owner must still complete the 28 wind down period and submit a NoI before carrying out the euthanasia. If

seeking a behavioural exemption, a GRV Re-homing Unsuitability Certificate must be lodged with the Nol.

A copy of this certificate can be downloaded from the Care and Standards website. This is the only form that will be accepted by GRV in support of a behavioural exemption.

Legal exemption from re-homing and Nol requirements

If the greyhound is **legally required to be euthanased** (e.g. council destruction order or court order), the owner may be exempt from the wind down, re-homing and Nol requirements of LR 42.6.

A fact sheet and FAQ's on LR 42.6 can be downloaded here:

<https://greyhoundcare.grv.org.au/new-local-rule-42-6/>

What do I need to do now?

Having now learned more about the intricacies of training the racing greyhound we hope that you are keen to join the ranks of Trainers within the industry as an Owner Trainer.

You can now complete the online assessment in FastTrack.

For more information on the application process and the requirements, please contact GRV on 03 8329 1100.

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