



National Council of SPCAs

Fact sheet - dog racing

Tel: 011 907 3590 • Fax: 011 907 4013 • E-mail: nspca@nspca.co.za • Website: www.nspca.co.za

In **1949** dog racing was banned in South Africa, gambling being cited as the main cause. Dog racing is not a traditional African pastime and was only introduced to South Africa in the 1930's.

Dog racing is a testimony that money drives this industry, and that the wellbeing of the animals are very low on the priority list. They do not view their racing dogs as sentient beings with physical, emotional and social needs.



DOG RACING IS CRUEL AND INHUMANE

Dog racing is synonymous with animal abuse and cruelty. Rules and regulations cannot satisfactorily address or control these issues as indicated by cases across the world.

Trainers and kennel caretakers very often keep an appallingly low standard in terms of the general care of the dogs at their kennel facilities resulting in serious animal welfare concerns. It varies from lack of provision in basic needs such as proper food, water, adequate living environment, and medical care.

ENDURING LIVES OF CONFINEMENT

There is no doubt that racing dogs are confined to enclosures, cages or kennels. Dog racers are the first to admit that racing dogs love to run—yet it is through their actions that these dogs are confined for most of their lives. The dogs are sometimes kept in their cages for 20 or more hours per day. The dogs are only taken out of their cages when they compete in races or during training.

Confinement denies the dogs the opportunity of undertaking normal activities.

**The SPCA is opposed
to animal racing.**

SERIOUS INJURIES WHILE RACING

Injuries are inherent in dog racing, regardless of the conditioning of the dogs or the racetracks. Research shows that racing dogs routinely suffer from dehydration, dislocation, cramping, foot injuries, broken bones, lacerations, muscle injuries, sprains, fractures, bruising, etc.



USE OF LIVE LURES (USE OF LIVE ANIMALS)

Greyhounds are sight hounds and trained to chase a lure which at the race track is a 'dummy' attached to a fast-moving mechanism that moves along a rail. However, in order to get young dogs (or later in their career, bored dogs) to chase the mechanical lure, they may be 'blooded' using live animals. Animals used for blooding include hares, rabbits, guinea pigs and kittens. They may have their legs broken or be harmed to make them scream and excite the dogs.



DRUG ABUSE

Racing dogs are commonly drugged to affect their performance and alter the outcome of the race. Both therapeutic and non-therapeutic drugs are widely used in the dog racing industry. Therapeutic drugs are used to treat both injuries resulting from this enterprise and also to maintain good management practices in routine care such as deworming medications. Some of these therapeutic drugs will affect the performance of the dog and may be used for this purpose, in order for a dog to race and test negative, the drugs must have worked through their systems and the animals should be allowed a period of rest, however this does not always happen.

DISPOSAL OF NON-RACERS AND BREEDING



Racing greyhounds have a limited racing lifespan of five years excluding their performance abilities and excluding injuries – so there is a continuing need to breed replacement dogs for 'top tracks'. Only a selected few dogs make it to the actual race and the surplus dogs will be sold into lower-level tracks, used for illegal hunting/poaching or disposed of in inhumane manners such as killing or abandoning the non-viable dogs.

Many unwanted and stray animals are euthanized by animal shelters across the country daily due to the overpopulation of dogs. Should dog racing be legalized it would mean that more dogs would be bred for this industry, resulting in more unwanted dogs being dumped at animal shelters, resulting in a rise of euthanasia statistics.

FAILED ATTEMPT TO DECLARE DOG RACING LEGAL

In the High Court of South Africa (Free State) - United Greyhound Racing and Breeders Society vs Vrystaat Dobbels and Wedren Raad en Andere 2003(2) SA 269 (0) – the applicants sought an order that declared:

- The Ordinance against dog racing had become abrogated by disuse as there were no efforts to enforce it.
- Alternatively, that it had been substituted by implication by the Free State Gambling and Racing Act 6 of 1996
- Further alternatively that its provisions were unconstitutional.

They failed on all counts and had insufficient funds to pay out the cost orders against them. Gambling is now legal in South Africa and proponents argue, that the ban on dog racing should now be lifted due to the change in gambling laws. However, many things have changed since 1949 – including South Africa becoming a fully-fledged democracy and the introduction of the Animal Protection Act, being promulgated in 1962.



All animals should have the right to the five freedoms:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease
4. Freedom to express normal behaviour
5. Freedom from fear and distress



**National Council
of SPCAs**