STOP GRANT AIDING THE GREYHOUND INDUSTRY

Pre-budget submission to the government

The Irish Council Against Blood Sports

October 2016
INTRODUCTION

The Irish Council Against Blood Sports was founded in 1966 and is a voluntary organisation campaigning for an end to the hunting of wild animals with dogs and other cruel sports that exploit and abuse animals.

Since 2001, the Irish Government has handed over nearly a quarter of a billion euro to the greyhound industry, including €14.8 million in 2016.

We are calling on the Minister for Finance and the government to recognise that the greyhound industry is a dying and failing industry and to stop grant aiding it with millions of Irish taxpayers’ hard earned money. We make this request on the following grounds: -
Greyhound Racing is inherently cruel

Greyhound racing and hare coursing are cruel and result in the premature deaths of thousands of greyhounds every year, while thousands of hares annually suffer terror and stress by being snatched from the wild, kept captive and used as live lures for greyhounds. Hares also suffer injuries and deaths, as reports received under FOI show.

As has been outlined in the report of the Joint Committee on Agriculture on the Greyhound Industry of January 2016, the Greyhound Rescue Association of Ireland (GRAI), who made a written submission to the Joint Committee, are quoted as saying:--

“Today Ireland produces and exports more greyhounds than any other country in the world, and every decision in an Irish greyhound’s life is conditioned by economics. Greyhounds are treated as disposable commodities. Each year thousands of Irish greyhounds retire from racing. While a few live out happy retirements, many thousands are cruelly abandoned or destroyed at the end of their racing careers.”

GRAI noted that while greyhounds are expected to live to 14 years on average, the life-span of a racing greyhound is 3-4 years. Many of these dogs are either euthanised or end up in local authority pounds. As such, the GRAI says that “it is impossible to place a concrete figure on the number of Irish registered greyhounds currently living (or even actively racing) in Ireland”.

GRAI also noted that in 2014, it was reported that there were 717 injuries to greyhounds, arising from dogs skidding and crashing on the surfaces of inadequately maintained tracks, and that that 3-4 dogs are euthanised at each operational racing track every Saturday.

We also know, from the many dog rescue groups around the country, that greyhounds are cruelly abandoned, sometimes with their ears mutilated so as to prevent the identification of the owners.
E maciated Emily: Severely injured with burned ears and hacked-off tail

In January of this year, the Irish Sun carried an horrific story about an emaciated greyhound abandoned in Clonmel with her ears burned with acid so that tattoos could not be seen, while the tip of her tail was hacked off for no apparent reason, other than to satisfy some perverted cruel and sadistic urge. This greyhound was rescued by an animal sanctuary in Waterford.

A volunteer who worked at the sanctuary at the time told us: “The greyhound was picked up just after Christmas after laying in a ditch for 24 hours. Emily was a shell when she arrived, shut down and broken. Both ears were burned with acid, they were raw both inside and out, the bone protruded from the end of her tail and she was desperately underweight. But she recovered and is back to full health.”

The same volunteer told us that this greyhound is, after 9 months, in the same animal sanctuary due to the fact that Bord na gCon are still dealing with her case, and that not one penny has been provided by Bord na gCon for her care over the nine months.

According to greyhound racing insiders quoted in a January 2016 Irish Sun article: Emily’s case is the “tip of the iceberg” and "isn’t an isolated incident". They added: “This type of brutality is happening all the time. This type of sickening action is the disgusting underbelly of the greyhound world. Too many owners and trainers have no sense of a duty of care towards the dogs once it is decided they are no longer of use.”
Pregnant greyhound brutally killed and dumped in cemetery in Clonmel

In August 2016, a female greyhound at the point of giving birth was found brutally killed and dumped in a cemetery in Clonmel.

The Irish Mirror reported that a woman visiting her mother's grave at St Patrick's cemetery in the Tipperary town was shocked to discover the animal "beaten to death".

"This poor innocent dog was clearly murdered and left in the cemetery," she wrote in a Facebook post, alongside a photograph of the dead dog. "I feel so angry, sick and upset that a person could do this to an animal...Something has to be done with animal cruelty in this town."

The Irish Animal Welfare Party later revealed that the dog was pregnant and in the process of giving birth. In a tweet, the party stated: "She had a puppy in the birth canal when they killed her. #Irish #Shame"

These incidents are but the tip of the iceberg, and the suffering of greyhounds in this inherently cruel industry is utterly appalling and totally unnecessary, and our government, shamefully, is funding and facilitating this horrific cruelty with taxpayers’ euros.
Westmeath TD raises issue of greyhound cruelty in Dail Eireann

Robert Troy TD, who is obviously aware of cruelty within the greyhound racing industry, put the following question to the then Minister Simon Coveney on January 28, 2016:

Question 140 – Answered on 28 January 2016

Robert Troy (Longford-Westmeath, Fianna Fail) To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he is aware of animal abuse suffered by greyhounds in the racing industry which includes lenient sanctions for persons who have committed grave abuses; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Doping of Dogs

It would appear that there is a serious problem in this country with regard to the doping of greyhounds in the racing industry. The recently publish Morris review, commissioned by Bord na gCon, accepts that the doping of greyhounds is a problem in the Irish greyhound racing industry, and it was critical of Bord na gCon’s oversight of the problem, stating that the IGB’s current sampling strategy was “too routine” with a perception of “no element of surprise” and that the existing functions of the control committee were “seriously hampered”, while the Greyhound Board of Great Britain do not view the IGB’s results management procedures as sufficient.

In another finding, the review states: “It does not appear that sampling collection procedures are regularly critically assessed by the IGB’s regulation department. The potential issues with the sample collection bottles that might potentially allow tampering with bottles used by the IGB were known to the laboratory staff.”

Also as outlined in the Joint Agriculture Committee’s report of January 2016, there is a constant problem of doping of greyhounds. The report states: “The use of controlled and illegal substances in greyhound racing in Ireland is of grave concern. Following a recommendation of the Indecon Review, BnG has published the Control Committee report results for 2013 and 2014 which detail outcomes of situations where prohibited substances were found to be present in samples taken from racing greyhounds across the country.”

However, despite Bord na gCon’s assurances that penalties would be imposed, the Welfare Members of the International Welfare Committee noted that between 2011 and 2013, as a result of 30 investigations, fixed notice penalties were issued in only 4 cases but no exclusion orders or disqualification order were issued.
Blooding Of Greyhounds

Although it is kept well hidden, blooding of greyhounds, a common training method in the greyhound racing industry, using rabbits, hares and other small animals, is an open secret within the industry.

It was blooding of greyhounds with small animals, as exposed by the Australian ABC TV network, at a greyhound training track in New South Wales, that finally led to the banning of greyhound racing in that region this year.

The appalling footage showed live piglets, rabbits and possums being used as bait to train some of the region’s most successful greyhounds, with greyhound trainers laughing and joking as the cruelty took place, with one remarking, as a possum snapped in half, exposing its spinal cord, “wouldn’t have much go in it; its guts are ripped out.”

In 1994, blooding of greyhounds at a training track in Donaskeagh, Co. Tipperary, was exposed when Donal McIntyre, came to the private track to film for a BBC documentary on greyhound racing. Cages of rabbits were brought to the track and the BBC cameraman was instructed to turn off the camera while the blooding took place. Thankfully, the camera remained running and the horrific cruelty was recorded. The dogs being blooded were those of a top trainer, Ger McKenna, and his son Owen was present while the cruelty took place. See the horrific incident at www.tinyurl.com/bloodingireland

Six people were prosecuted, including Owen McKenna, and received jail sentences of six months, but we understand that this was successfully appealed.

Greyhound commentator and journalist, the late John Martin, an avid fan of greyhound racing and coursing, writing about the issue of
blooding of greyhounds at the time, stated, "The bald truth is that greyhound racing would not continue to exist without blooding. It follows that, with a constant greyhound population of close on 30,000, blooding must be widespread. Do not expect an admission of that from Bord na gCon." See his article 'Why They Can't Halt the Blooding'...

More recently, in a June 2004 Irish Independent report, John Martin wrote that there were allegations of 6am trials at an Irish Greyhound Board-licensed racing track in Dundalk involving the use of live hares to blood greyhounds. A staff member was fired but management denied it was connected to blooding allegations.

During an Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee meeting, Bord na gCon's Chief Executive said that blooding is not condoned. However, responding to a statement from then Green Party TD Dan Boyle that it could happen without their knowledge, the CEO conceded that "anything can happen without one's knowledge".
GREYHOUND RACING IN IRELAND: THE DRAMATIC DECLINE

2007  1.28 million
50% Drop in Attendance between 2007 and 2014
2014  644,000

GREYHOUND RACING IN IRELAND: FALLING SPONSORSHIP

2007  €2.09 million
58% Fall in Sponsorship between 2007 and 2014
2014  €879,000
CONCLUSION

It simply cannot be denied that cruelty is inherent and endemic in the greyhound racing and coursing industry, with a racing greyhound’s life cut short at 3-4 years of age, the abandonment of greyhounds, the doping of greyhounds and the use of live animals to blood greyhounds.

It is an industry that cannot be cleaned up or rehabilitated, and this has been shown throughout the world, with greyhound racing being banned in many regions, the most recent being New South Wales, Australia, and in 40 American states commercial greyhound racing is illegal.

It should also be noted that this is a failing, dying industry with plummeting attendances, declining sponsorship and tote.

Greyhound racing should not be funded by the people of Ireland, the majority of whom have no interest in greyhound racing and are rightly opposed to cruelty to animals.