

Dr Jade Norris notes from Australian Greyhound Veterinarians Conference, Melbourne 9 October 2015. *A Study of Injuries in Victorian Racing Greyhounds 2006-2011*. Presentation by Dr Linda Beer (Greyhound Welfare Manager, Greyhound Racing Victoria)

General

- Study covered 444,046 eligible starts over 6 year period in Victoria
- 28,887 starts in the study period resulted in a greyhound being examined by the track vet
- 15,906 received a stand down
- Serious injury defined in study as greyhound receiving a > 3 week stand down. This was found in the GRV study to be 5.99/1000 starts (including euthanasia)
- 434 were euthanased (76% of these had a fracture)
- 18 died

RSPCA subsequent comment on these figures:

- *This is considered likely to be an under estimate as injuries sustained on race day may be detected post-race day.*
- *Euthanasias performed after race day due to race day injury may also occur and would not be captured by this dataset.*
- *This did not include trials and excluded scratchings (scratchings occurring days before the scheduled race and those due to pre-race vet exam).*

Risk factors for serious tarsal injury/hock fractures

Figures:

- Out of 443,941 starts, 330 were recorded as 'serious tarsal injury' (105 removed from total of 444,046)
- 86.1% of these were Right hock

Greyhounds typically race in an anti-clockwise direction meaning that the right hind limb takes the pressure/bodyweight load as the greyhound goes around the corner. Rotational forces.

Risk factors

- Dog factors
- Track factors (circular/straight, grass vs sand etc)
- Race-related – collisions/landing
- Procedure
- Trainer factors

There are straight tracks, U-turn tracks and circular tracks. The GRV study found a significantly lower risk for tarsal injury on straight tracks (e.g. Healesville track).

Other tracks were found to have increased odds of tarsal injury – but more research needed on why as tracks with same radius, diameter and width found to have markedly different odds of serious tarsal injury. → interplay of multiple complex track factors surface? Conditions under surface? etc

Study looked at other factors such as Box/racing number – these were not found to influence injury rate/not relevant.

Bodyweight:

- 35-37kg range = x3 odds
- 37.5 kg = x 2.5 odds

Age of dog:

- 27 months of age = x2 odds
- 36 months of age = x 4 odds

One proposal is to extend racing career so retirement age is later however if age is associated with increased risk of serious tarsal injury?? Further consideration needed.

Research indicates - microfractures and remodelling occurring in tarsal bones due to applied load forces → catastrophic event.

Further GRV information

Serious injury defined as greyhound receiving a > 3 week stand down

This was found in the GRV study to be 5.99/1000 starts (including euthanasia)

0.98/1000 euthanased

0.04/1000 died

RSPCA subsequent comments:

Extrapolating nationally this would equate to approximately:

- 312 euthanasias each year at track nationally
- 13 deaths on track each year nationally

This would in turn equate to about 6-7 greyhounds dying (euthanased/death on track) each week nationally.

Note this would likely be an underestimate of the actual euthanasia/death rate as this does not include trial races or euthanasias performed after race day due to injury sustained on race day.

It is not known if the GRV data included non-TAB race meetings which could represent further under reporting.

D. Auer (1999) Australian study SE QLD greyhound injuries

Major injury rate

- 11.59/1000 on sand tracks
- 12.06/1000 on grass tracks
- Euthanased 1.49/1000
- Death 0.06 /1000

RSPCA subsequent comment:

Extrapolating nationally this would equate to approximately:

- 474 euthanasias each year nationally at track
- 20 deaths on track each year nationally

This would in turn equate to about 9-10 greyhounds dying (euthanasia/death on track) each week nationally.

Common injury areas:

Gracilis muscles

Hock (ankle area)

Feet/toes/webbing

Triceps muscle

Carpus (wrist area)