



Give A Greyhound A Home



About GAGAH

GAGAH is a non-profit making organisation. It was set up in 1999 to encourage people to choose a rescue greyhound in preference to a privately bred dog. The aim of GAGAH is to rehome greyhounds and lurchers and to raise awareness on what happens to them once they have served their use.

This information pack contains advice for anyone considering re-homing a greyhound or lurcher and hopefully goes some way in dispelling the many misconceptions some people have about them.

About Greyhounds

Past History

The Greyhound is one of the oldest breeds of dogs. They have descended from an ancient breed, which dates back to Egyptian times. They were worshipped by Egyptians & owned only by Kings.

By the 11th century in Britain the ownership of a greyhound was an exclusive right of the nobility. Around this time the punishment for killing them was death.

Present day

Thousands of greyhounds each year are abandoned or 'disposed of' because they no longer 'make the grade' and have lost their potential to win races or have proved not to be of a racing standard. There are associations fighting the cause to reduce these numbers by appealing to the National Greyhound Racing Club (NRGC) to take even more responsibility for the needs of these abandoned dogs. Greyhound puppies are routinely killed before the age of 1yr each year if they fail to meet racing standard, this amounts to thousands each year.

It is uncertain how many are 'inhumanely' destroyed by owners who have no use for them anymore. Greyhounds have been found dumped in trenches after being shot or drowned with their ears hacked off so that they cannot be traced back to their owners via their tattoos.

Each year around 10,000 racing greyhounds are 'retired' before the age of four.

The NCDL have stated that at any one time, up to one third of the dogs in their rescue centres are greyhounds or lurchers.

Greyhounds as Pets

- ☺ Greyhounds are graceful, gentle, loving, lazy and patient creatures who crave human affection, probably due to their isolated upbringing.
- ☺ As mentioned previously, they make ideal 'Therapet' or P.A.T dogs. The 'Therapet' scheme is run by Canine Concern Scotland Trust and involves owners taking their registered dogs to nursing homes, children's hospitals, schools etc. to visit patients who love animals but have no access to them. At present the 'Therapet' scheme has 5 registered greyhounds. P.A.T. has 8 greyhounds registered.
- ☺ They eat the same amount of food as other dogs of their size and require no special veterinary attention.
- ☺ They are the only large breeds of dog not plagued by hip dysplasia.

- ☺ Greyhounds are better with children than most breeds. They are very tolerant and will more likely walk away from a naughty child rather than growl or snap. Aggressiveness has been virtually eliminated from the breed. As with any dog, do not leave children alone with your pet and ensure children know how to behave with the dog.
- ☺ For sleeping, they love a soft quilt, as they like to stretch out & don't have a lot of body fat they can use for padding. Due to their lack of body fat it is advisable to buy a coat for them, especially for wintertime as they really feel the cold.
- ☺ It is recommended that your garden is enclosed & secure, ideally with a 6ft fence as they can jump to surprisingly high heights.
- ☺ Domestic noises may startle them as most of them have been used to kennel life. Gently introduce them to any noises they would not have been likely to hear when they were kennel dogs. Glass, Patio doors are new to them as well so ensure they are aware that they cannot run through them.
- ☺ A good book by Anne Finch titled 'Pet Owner's Guide to the Greyhound' is available in most book shops and I would recommend reading this to obtain more information about your new dog.
- ☺ It is advisable to **muzzle your dog** until you are 100% sure of his reaction to other pets & small animals. It is not cruel to muzzle your dog & greyhounds especially are so used to them as they are worn when training & racing. Do not forget that they have been trained to chase lures. Taking time to get to know your dog, as with any breed, should avoid any problem situations. Keep him on a leash until you have assessed his level of obedience. Please bear in mind the image a lot of people still have of them i.e. that they are aggressive, kill cats & small dogs, this makes the job of re-homing them even more difficult. Most dogs will chase cats, it's just that greyhounds are more likely to catch cats than any other breed. Ensure you keep them on the leash & under control until you've judged whether or not they are showing any 'unhealthy' interest in small dogs. **If you have a greyhound that is unsafe with other animals then you MUST be prepared to keep your dog muzzled at ALL times in any public places. Do NOT put other people's beloved pets at risk.**

REMEMBER : It is NOT the dogs fault that he is trained so well and his instinct is strong, so he should not be punished if irresponsible owners do not keep him under control AND muzzled. IT IS NOT AGGRESSION – IT IS INSTINCT & TRAINING. You would not punish a sniffer dog for finding drugs, or a police dog for catching a thief! NOT ALL GREYHOUNDS CHASE SMALL ANIMALS – A lot of dogs in our care have been homed with cats, jack russell's etc... MOST greyhounds have never seen any other 'dog shapes' and majority of the time they just need socialised. They soon figure out that not all dogs are greyhound shaped.

- ☺ **Greyhounds and Cats** – All our greyhounds are 'cat tested' and assessed with small dogs. Even if your 'potential' dog passes the 'cat test' you must still take precautions until you are 150% sure that he has no interest in the cat. On arriving home keep him muzzled and on the leash. Ensure the dog sees the cats in all scenarios i.e. running, jumping, walking along the worktops etc.. and if he shows any interest then again a firm 'NO' is required. When he looks away from the cat, praise him. This training **MUST** be repeated outside as this is another environment for him. Seeing a cat run outside is again another new scenario. Until you are confident, **NEVER** leave your greyhound and cat alone together. I know many people who own cats and greyhounds and they live in complete harmony. In fact, most of the time the cats are the boss and often put the dogs in their place. One swipe from a cat can often be enough to put a big, wimpy greyhound off for life. I have seen this myself in many cat tests. **People with cats will only be given a dog, which has passed the cat test.**
- ☺ **Toilet Training** – this can be done easily and quickly. When you get your dog home take him out each hour every hour for the first 2 days and when he does the toilet give him a special treat e.g. chicken, cheese and make a fuss of him. Make sure these extra special treats are only given for toilet training. If you do catch him toileting in the house then give him a firm 'NO' – take him outside and when he does it there give treats and praise. Do not reprimand him if you don't catch him as he will not know what he's being reprimanded for.
- ☺ Another myth about greyhounds is that they require vast amounts of exercise. This is not the case, they are more than happy to sleep on their comfy beds with 2 or 3 20mins walk each day. They enjoy being spoiled & showered with love and care. By nature they are quite lazy dogs.
- ☺ When you first bring your greyhound home he may suffer from 'anxiety', as with any dog being introduced to new surroundings & routines. Make sure that he knows your routine as soon as possible as this will help him settle in. Symptoms of anxiety can be restlessness, excessive panting & drinking and **chewing furniture**, he may whine for a while to. Routine is all he needs. Find a good balance between attention & encouraging him to be independent, as you do not want to encourage 'separation anxiety'. Leave him on his own for short periods of time as part of his new routine. Sometimes even leaving a radio on can give him comfort. The periods of separation can then be lengthened as he settles in. Be prepared for a dog that may chew and destroy some of your belongings. If you cannot cope with this then think again about a rescue dog. **Most dogs are returned because of people NOT persevering with this problem even though they have been told to expect it.**
- ☺ **Sleep Aggression** – is something all dogs can have although it is not very common. Greyhounds sleep very deeply and sometimes with their eyes open. Sleep aggression is like sleepwalking, if a dog is in a deep sleep and is taken by surprise

then he can react before he has actually woken up. This could cause him to jump up and growl or snap. Especially if you have children, ensure the dog has his 'time-out' safe haven for sleeping to avoid this.

- ☺ Even if you feel your dog does not require any obedience training, it would be a good idea to take him along to your local dog training class. This would allow you to introduce them to other dogs of all shapes & sizes as well as socialising him with many other people & children. It also, gets people used to seeing greyhounds & lets them see what laid back, loving dogs they are.

Medical Considerations/Facts

Medical sensitivities

The breed has a very low percentage of body fat in proportion to its size. There is, on the average, only 16% fat in a Greyhound's body weight versus about 35% fat in body weight for a comparably sized dog of another breed.

Greyhounds are very sensitive to certain medications, including anaesthesia. Before your dog undergoes any surgery, make sure that your vet is aware of the special 'pre-med' requirements for your dog. Do not be afraid to ask questions of your vet.

Products containing Pyrethrins are generally safe to use on Greyhounds, and given their very short coat, flea combs are especially effective. However, one of the best treatments for fleas are Program and Frontline. Program is in tablet form and Frontline is in spot-on form. Both these products have shown to be very safe in all breeds of dog. Consult your Vet before any treatment you apply.

Care also needs to be taken when deworming a Greyhound, as they are extremely sensitive to anything with an organophosphate base. Drontal plus or Panacur liquid should be used. Both these products are effective in treating all the commonly encountered 'worms'. Seek advice before deworming.

Bloat

As with other deep chested breeds, Greyhounds are prone to bloat, or torsion. Bloat is a life threatening disease where the stomach flips over. Immediate medical attention is required to avoid death. Preventive measures include avoiding exercise just before and for an hour or two after eating; avoiding ingestion of large amounts of water immediately after eating dry kibble.

Symptoms include distended abdomen, repeated unproductive vomiting, pacing and restlessness. It can kill quickly, an immediate trip to the vet is in order. You may wish to discuss bloat with your vet, to set up in advance what to do should it happen to your dog. Your vet may also suggest other things you can do while driving to the vet's for emergency care to improve your dog's chances for survival.

Considerations for the ex-racer

Because racing Greyhounds are kennelled with a large number of other dogs in a highly transient population, you will probably have to make sure your dog is checked for worms and tick-borne diseases such as Ehrlichia and Babesia.

A greyhound in racing condition will probably lose muscle and put on some extra fat once retired. While they should not become overweight, few dogs remain at racing weight, often gaining about 5 pounds in their retirement. This is to be expected.

Your dog may have been taken off the track for many reasons. Apart from 'losing' consistently, the most common reason is through injury.

The centrifugal forces on the sharp bends of the track put enormous strain on the dogs' wrist joints and on the toes. Collisions with other dogs, or even with the fence can also cause damage if the dog has been knocked off the track.

Old injuries will not always be obvious and so there is the potential for arthritis in later life. But we are prone to arthritis too, so let us assume that you will have grown so attached to your dog by the time that if it happens you will seek the best advice available to ensure his comfort.

Bone Cancer

It's not actually known whether Greyhounds are actually more predisposed toward bone cancer than other breeds, but there are enough anecdotal stories to warrant keeping an eye on your dog for this, especially a former racer. The first symptoms involve lameness in the leg.

Hygroma

This is common in large dogs especially over bony prominences like elbows. It is usually seen in dogs housed on hard flooring. A hygroma is a fluid-filled bursa which forms to protect the skin from pressure necrosis from the bone underneath. They can get inflamed or even ulcerate. They tend to look more alarming than they are; your vet can advise you of the best course to take.

Hypothyroidism

Many Greyhounds appear to have low-normal levels of thyroid. Symptoms of hypothyroidism include: hair loss (on rear and neck, usually bilateral and typically through thinning), darkening or thickening of the skin, and lethargy. Sometimes irritableness and/or wheezing are indicators. Untreated, hypothyroidism can have serious long-term effects.

Greyhound Facts

To allow greyhounds to hunt & race together, and to make greyhounds tolerate constant handling by a number of people (including children), aggressiveness towards other dogs and people has been nearly eliminated from the breed

Many people who are allergic to dogs are NOT allergic to greyhounds, due to their short, sleek coat and skin type, which has more oil to it, thus less dandruff.

For people with asthma, we usually advise to stick with either black or dark brindle coloured greyhounds as they loose very little hair.

Greyhounds are the fastest breed of dog, reaching top speeds of 40 miles per hour! Greyhounds can see CLEARLY for a distance of a half-mile.

Annette Crosby (Mrs Meldrew from 'One Foot in the Grave') has 3 rescue greyhounds and through 'Greyhounds UK', she and many others are raising awareness on the 'plight' of the greyhound & educating people on the suitability of greyhounds as pets.

A Greyhound, named Primley Sceptre won 'Best in Show' at Crufts in 1925, this was the first time for such an award to be made. Another Greyhound took the same award in 1954.

Summary

Greyhounds are a wonderful, graceful, loving breed of dog. Once you have owned or even met one you will be hooked. All they want to do is sleep. They run out of steam so quickly, mainly due to the fact that they are trained to run short distances at a very fast speed. They are not well known for their stamina or endurance, however, as long as you're with them, they are happy to walk as long as you want. Older dogs are especially loveable, my greyhound is 10 years old & he is an elegant gentleman. As I mentioned before, they make wonderful 'Therapet' and P.A.T dogs, this allows you to share their wonderful nature with others who are not in a position to have their own dog.

When you get your dog home he may appear aloof & indifferent but he will be sort of 'shell shocked'. Remember most of these dogs have been kept in kennels most of their lives, this is probably why they relish attention so much. Once they settle into your routine just watch their personalities develop. They sometimes start to play like puppies. They start training from early age & miss out on the normal puppy period.

I appeal to the reader to seriously consider to **Give A Greyhound A Home**. You won't regret it and you can spread the news about them and help to reduce the number of dogs in rescue centres.

Now that you have read about them and decided you are ready for the responsibility and commitment please get back in touch to proceed to the next step.

You can find the GAGAH website on : www.gagah.co.uk

GAGAH asks for £70 minimum donation. This money goes towards spaying/neutering costs, advertising and to help other dogs find good homes.

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A Greyhound's Story

It wasn't all that long ago I ran the dusty track for show, Devoted and driven my face pierced the wind as race after race I fought to contend.
Slow at the turn and lacking in grace I did what I could but I never placed.
I loved to run hard and hear the crowd roar, yet those cheers turned to boos when I didn't score.
Folks lost their money when they bet on me, they tagged me a loser, said "Retire number three!!".
I had no idea what I was likely to find as I walked from the track for the very last time.
My person was writing, eyes teared and face so long, I sensed inside the sadness that this time I'd not go home.
I tried to change my person's mind and wagged my mighty tail, but I knew deep down without a doubt, like racing I had failed.
We drove along the country roads till we came upon a town where erected off the main drag was a place known as the pound.
A pretty woman came outside and took me from my crate. My person signed the papers and with one look at my face
Said, "I'm sorry that I have to go and leave you here to sleep".

I felt my heart break into bits and walked with head bent low. I knew that it was over and I had no place to go.
Inside the dingy building I was checked and tagged and weighed, I heard the pretty woman state
"Don't look him in the eye - He has that Greyhound Gaze that says, I do not want to die"
They put me in a kennel with the others on death row. I lay down on the concrete and moaned so soft and low.
Morning filtered through the glass, I stretched my weary bones. The pretty woman came to me and said "It's time to go"
The hall was long and dark and cold, I did not cry or weep. I used my eyes and face and soul to halt eternal sleep.
She tried her best to use defence and look away from me, she seemed to know how wrong it was to do this deadly deed.
She bent down close and held my face against her silken cheek, the needle entered my front leg and quickly I felt weak.
I heard the pretty woman sob as she lay me on the floor. I saw the last glimpse of her face and then I saw no more.
I may not have been the fastest dog to ever run the track, **I just wish someone had loved me so I could have loved them back.**
(poet - Pat Graham)