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## Euthanized racing greyhounds prompt concerns

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More than a dozen greyhounds were euthanized after suffering injuries while racing on the Sarasota Kennel Club track this past season, raising questions about the dogs' welfare and track safety.

Fourteen greyhounds were put down after track accidents during 19 weeks of racing at the club, three of which were euthanized on a single March day after a series of collisions, according to a letter track racing director Thomas Bowersox wrote to a state investigator.

A fourth dog also suffered a leg fracture during the March 20 races, but was kept alive to rehabilitate.

"It is just as in any racing sport that animals or things are asked to turn left at the speed (sic) are running, sometimes collisions occur with serious results," Bowersox wrote in the April letter to the state Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering.

The exact number of greyhounds that were injured and euthanized at the Sarasota club is not available because Florida does not require injury reports from racetracks.

GREY2KUSA -- a national nonprofit group that advocates for greyhound protection laws and eliminating dog racing -- argues that the investigation into the Sarasota Kennel Club was a mere "snapshot" of a larger problem.

"That dogs are seriously injured on a regular basis is one of the dog racing industry's dirty little secrets," said Carey Theil, the executive director for the Massachusetts-based group.

The Sarasota Kennel Club, at 5400 Bradenton Road, holds greyhound racing from November through April.

An investigation was opened after a Pari-Mutuel Wagering manager visited the club to conduct a hearing three days after the March incident.

Bowersox attributed the clashes to poor track conditions caused by heavy rains. A refresh of the racing surface was completed immediately after the collisions.

The case was closed after Bowersox affirmed his commitment to monitor the track surface and ensure greyhounds are healthy to race. A voicemail message left last week at Bowersox's office was not returned.

Florida's lack of policy on the reporting of greyhound injuries leaves Theil and other advocates questioning how many other dogs are being injured and euthanized at the Sarasota club and the state's 12 other tracks.



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Greyhounds make their way down the raceway at the Sarasota Kennel Club. The club was investigated by state pari-mutuel regulators after three dogs were euthanized on one day due to injuries.

"If the public understood how many greyhounds are being seriously injured and even dying at these racetracks, I think they would reconsider their support of this facility in their community," Theil said.

Bowersox pointed out in the letter that the 14 euthanized greyhounds were a "very small percent" of the dogs that raced at the Sarasota Kennel Club this season.

"Although one of these injuries is too many, consider we have been racing 19 weeks, 116 races per week, which accounts for 17,632 greyhounds that raced on this surface," he wrote.

Logs from the track veterinarian showed 24 greyhounds were treated between March 1 and March 24.

Other states that require reporting show significant injury rates; at one West Virginia track, more than 700 greyhounds were reported injured in an 18-month period.

Overall, there are 23 greyhound racetracks in eight states, Theil added.

"Tracks don't want to talk about dogs," Theil said. "They make them into statistics and numbers. Those are dogs that suffered and died."

GREY2KUSA has been instrumental in the passage of dog racing bans in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and soon in New Hampshire, Theil said.

The group recently supported a section of a Florida bill that gives the Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering the ability to inspect kennels, she added.