

Greyhound Racing in West Virginia



Subsidies for a dying industry

There are two operational greyhound tracks in West Virginia: Wheeling Island in Wheeling and Mardi Gras in Cross Lanes. An antiquated state law requires these gambling facilities to hold hundreds of races per year in order to offer other, more profitable forms of gambling.

Gambling on live dog racing in West Virginia declined by 34% between 2010 and 2017, following a decades-long national trend. Last November, Florida citizens voted to end greyhound racing by a decisive vote of 69% to 31%. When that law fully takes effect, commercial dog racing will be illegal in 41 states.



A caged greyhound at the Mardi Gras dog track in West Virginia, 2014.

Under the state dog racing mandate, roughly \$15 million in state gambling revenues must also be used to subsidize races every year. These funds could instead be used for important state programs like education, health care or improving our roads. A large percentage of these subsidies go to greyhound breeders living in other states.

Greyhounds endure lives of confinement

More than 1,500 greyhounds are kept in warehouse style-kennel compounds in West Virginia. During the month of August 2019, a total of 607 dogs raced at Mardi Gras and 891 at Wheeling. At these compounds, dogs are kept in rows of stacked metal cages for long hours each day, with shredded paper or carpet remnants for bedding. State regulations require just a minimum cage size of 44 inches long, 32 inches wide, and 34 inches high, and do not limit the amount of time greyhounds can be left confined.

Every ten days a greyhound dies

According to state records, a racing greyhound dies every ten days in West Virginia. Since January 2008 there were 8,879 greyhound injuries reported at West Virginia dog tracks. More than 3,000 dogs suffered broken bones during this period, and at least 412 greyhounds died after suffering serious injuries.

Other animal welfare problems

Since 2007 the state has issued rulings in more than 800 disciplinary cases, including over 100 drug violations and 19 cases related to animal abuse or neglect. Rulings include multiple cases of licensees hitting greyhounds, a broken-legged greyhound who did not receive medical treatment for days, and poor kennel conditions.

Female greyhounds are routinely given methyltestosterone, an anabolic steroid, to prevent a loss of race days. This performance enhancing drug is prohibited in other dog racing jurisdictions, but continues in West Virginia.

Greyhounds are fed raw "4-D" meat from dying, diseased, disabled and dead animals. This meat is used to reduce costs, despite the serious health problems known to be associated with it.