

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
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BOOKMAKERS SHOULD DO MORE TO SUPPORT GREYHOUND WELFARE AND THE WIDER INDUSTRY, SAY MPs

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NEW REPORT: *Greyhound Welfare*.

Bookmakers must contribute more to protecting racing dogs and should not prioritise profit over high welfare standards, the cross-party Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has said.

Neil Parish MP, Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee:

“All racing greyhounds should enjoy high welfare standards both during their racing career and retirement. Bookmakers who profit from greyhound racing should contribute to welfare standards regardless of whether the profits are from high-street stores, online or overseas betting. The welfare of racing greyhounds shouldn’t be at the whim of bookmakers who can simply choose to contribute or not. The Government should consider introducing a statutory levy or an alternative betting rights model to protect animal welfare.”

Bookmakers’ contributions

The Committee heard evidence that the greyhound industry is under severe financial strain and is concerned about the consequences this may have for the welfare of racing greyhounds. Bookmakers’ voluntary welfare contributions to the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) have fallen by almost 50% over the last decade. This decline is partly due to some bookmakers choosing not to contribute from certain formats, such as online or overseas trade, or in the case of Betfair ceasing all contributions.

Publication of welfare data

The report also finds that the lack of publicly available data on injuries sustained by racing dogs makes it difficult to judge the current level of welfare provision. Legislation introduced in 2010 requires the industry to keep data relating to injury but it is not required to publish it. So far all records have been closely guarded in spite of clear demand among charities, trainers and veterinarians for greater transparency within the industry. MPs highlight that the lack of transparency sustains the suspicions of critics.

Simon Hart MP:

“Whilst the committee identified areas of concern where improvements can be made we also noted many areas where welfare issues were treated with the seriousness they deserve and standards of care and scrutiny met with public expectation. In particular, we welcome GBGB’s proposed new centralised database for injury statistics. Defra should amend the 2010 regulations to make the

publication of welfare data mandatory in order to help the industry challenge external criticism, and show that all efforts are being made to avoid preventable deaths.”

Retirement

MPs found that there was a significant lack of information concerning the fate of retired greyhounds and that the number of healthy dogs potentially being destroyed due to oversupply was of major concern. The Committee calls for greater transparency about the destiny of racing dogs and that rehoming data is made available.

Jim Fitzpatrick MP:

“We simply do not know what is happening to all greyhounds after they finish racing. If the destruction of healthy dogs is happening on a large scale it is clear that the industry should bear a greater financial responsibility for funding rehomed greyhounds. We want to see that all efforts are being made to rehome these animals at the end of their racing lives.”

Kennelling

MPs report that that the regulations introduced in 2010 have successfully brought the same minimum standards to all racing tracks. However, ninety five per cent of a dog’s racing life will be spent in private kennels which is why the industry must maintain welfare standards at these premises. Given evidence of considerable financial strain on trainers the Committee recommends stronger oversight of all commercial kennels, including independent verification, supporting the stated ambition of the Greyhound Board of Great Britain.