

Greyhound On-Track Euthanasia Guidelines



Purpose	To provide On-Track Veterinarians (OTVs), Stewards and Participants with clear guidelines on the euthanasia of greyhounds on-track.
Scope	This guideline applies to the euthanasia of a greyhound during a greyhound race meeting including races, post-race trials, qualifying trial meetings, or whenever an OTV is in attendance.
Related policies and documents	Animal Welfare Act – 1999 GRNZ Regulations and Rules of Racing GRNZ Welfare Code.

Introduction

Greyhound Racing New Zealand (GRNZ) is committed to greyhound welfare as its primary objective, including strategies to significantly reduce racing injuries, and has invested heavily in racing safety initiatives. The focus on reducing on-track euthanasia is important to ensure greyhounds have the opportunity for a life beyond racing where appropriate, and this particularly relates to when the extent or seriousness of the injury is uncertain due to diagnostic limitations on-track and/or when decisions are being made in an emotionally-charged environment.

The RIU contracts On-Track Veterinarians (OTVs) to officiate at race meetings, post-race trials, qualifying trial meeting. OTVs are contracted through a commercial agreement that requires compliance with the Greyhound Racing New Zealand (GRNZ) OTV Protocol that states “**OTVs shall not carry out euthanasia on any greyhound that is not seriously injured**”.

However, there is no definition of “serious” and some OTVs are uncertain about GRNZ’s expectations as to when euthanasia on-track is reasonable or acceptable, compared to participant’s expectations.

Definitions	For the purposes of these guidelines, GRNZ defines a Serious Injury as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an injury where the greyhound is moribund and is not expected to live longer than 24 hours regardless of treatment; or• an injury where the greyhound’s quality of life will continue to deteriorate regardless of reasonable attempts at veterinary treatment; or• multiple and severe lacerations that involve significant bleeding that cannot be controlled or would require extensive surgery to repair; or
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- **a confirmed complex and/or compound bone (including skull/spine) fracture and/or**
- significantly displaced fracture of all metacarpals or metatarsals on one foot where the OTV considers that surgical repair would be required to provide a suitable welfare outcome.

For the purposes of these guidelines, GRNZ does not consider any of the following to be a Serious Injury unless there are significant exacerbating factors:

- *A suspected fracture or suspected dislocation; or*
- *A confirmed simple and/or greenstick and/or un-displaced fracture where the OTV considers that surgical repair would NOT be required to provide a suitable welfare outcome; or*
- ***A hock fracture not meeting the definition of a Serious Injury (above) and/or where the severity or classification of the injury is uncertain and requires further diagnostic workup; or***
- *Fractures of metacarpals and/or metatarsals not meeting the definition of a Serious Injury (above); or*
- *Fractures of phalanges and/or sesamoids; or*
- *A tail fracture; or*
- *A non-articular scapula fracture; or*
- *Rib fracture(s) unless accompanied by/with respiratory symptoms.*

For the purposes of these guidelines, GRNZ defines a **Serious Medical Condition** as a medical condition (that is not an injury) where:

- the greyhound's prognosis is poor; or
- the greyhound is moribund; or
- the greyhound is not expected to live longer than 24 hours regardless of treatment; or
- the greyhound's quality of life will continue to deteriorate regardless of reasonable attempts at veterinary treatment.

Serious Medical Conditions include collapse or unconsciousness without recovery, Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus (GDV), intestinal torsion, splenic rupture, cardiac failure, severe dyspnoea and/or continued seizing.

When on-track euthanasia SHOULD be undertaken

In accordance with the **Animal Welfare Act 1999**, even if it is against the wishes of the owner, immediate euthanasia of a greyhound on-track should be undertaken when the greyhound is moribund or not expected to live longer than 24 hours regardless of treatment. This means that despite attempts made at medical intervention, the greyhound's physical condition and welfare will likely deteriorate. It includes greyhounds with severe skull fractures, severe multi-systemic trauma (including massive soft tissue and/or bone injury) or severe multi-systemic failure.

When on-track euthanasia MAY be considered

It is GRNZ's expectation that euthanasia of a greyhound on-track may only be considered in the following two scenarios:

- (1) the greyhound has suffered a **Serious Injury** or a **Serious Medical Condition**; or
- (2) the greyhound has NOT suffered a Serious Injury or a Serious Medical Condition BUT is suffering from a significant injury AND at least one of the following situations apply:
 - (i) the greyhound is suffering from significant pain, and all reasonable attempts to alleviate that pain (including injury stabilisation and reasonable/appropriate pain relief as per the OTV minimum standards) have failed or are very likely to fail, and/or moving the greyhound is likely to cause further significant injury and/or pain; or
 - (ii) it is the professional opinion of the OTV that the greyhound will be, or is highly likely to be, in significant lifelong pain or suffering, or have a significantly reduced quality of life even if the injury or medical condition is treated; or
 - (iii) it is the professional opinion of the OTV that treatment of the greyhound's injury or medical condition is not likely to be successful without extensive rehabilitation, which would be unreasonable to impose on the greyhound; or
 - (iv) the greyhound is suffering from significant pain, and while a full clinical determination of the injury is required to ascertain treatment options and prognosis, further veterinary support and treatment cannot be provided within two (2) hours due to the unavailability of emergency veterinary services.

When on-track euthanasia should NOT be undertaken

It is GRNZ's expectation that euthanasia of a greyhound on-track should NOT occur when the greyhound is NOT suffering a Serious Injury or a Serious Medical Condition, and none of the above scenarios (2) (i)-(iv) apply. In these cases, the OTV must:

- a. provide appropriate veterinary treatment (including, but not limited to, appropriate pain relief and stabilisation of any injury).

General on-track euthanasia requirements:

1. Euthanasia must only be carried out with **written** consent of the owner or owner's agent, except where euthanasia is, in the OTV's opinion, justified on humane grounds in accordance with the **Animal Welfare Act 1999** (where delaying euthanasia while waiting for written consent would be inhumane).
2. Euthanasia must only be performed by intravenous overdose of pentobarbitone, and may be preceded by sedation or analgesia, if necessary, to reduce the greyhound's distress prior to euthanasia.
3. Euthanasia should ideally be conducted in the veterinary examination room, out of sight of other greyhounds. Unless approved by the OTV, only one Steward and the Participant(s) in charge of the greyhound may be present during the euthanasia procedure.

4. If euthanasia is required to be performed in a public area, the club will provide adequate screening so that the euthanasia can be conducted with privacy to minimise distress to those involved and the wider public. The OTV must follow safety directions of the Stewards if entering the race track and must act in a safe manner at all times. The club will also provide adequate transport and coverings for the deceased greyhound, if the deceased greyhound needs to be carried through a public area. The deceased greyhound should be promptly transported to the veterinary examination room.
5. Unless delaying euthanasia is inhumane, a Steward must be present during veterinary examination of all greyhounds suffering from a Serious Injury or a Serious Medical Condition and will be present during any discussion regarding euthanasia of a greyhound on-track. The Steward and OTV must complete standard GRNZ documentation including the Track Death Incident Form, documenting the diagnosis, discussion and decision-making process.
6. Stewards must support the OTV in their decision-making and must ensure that the OTV is not pressured into making any decision in contradiction with these Guidelines. The OTV must notify the Steward in Charge if there is any concern regarding being pressured into making any decision in contradiction with these Guidelines.
7. The decision to euthanise on-track must be based on the welfare considerations and the seriousness of the injury, and not on greyhound's behavioural issues and/or the greyhound's future race career.
8. If euthanasia is performed, the OTV is responsible for providing the body bag but the RIU or GRNZ will arrange and cover the costs of disposal/cremation.
9. If the owner requests home burial or return of the greyhound's ashes, a Steward will need to note this on the form. The return of ashes if requested will be at the owner/trainers' expense.