

Greyhound Nutrition – Feeding for Success



GREYHOUND WELFARE STANDARDS

Standard 1 of the **GRNZ Greyhound Welfare Standards** sets out the minimum standards for greyhound health and care that must be adhered to by Licensed Persons (LPs) responsible for the care of greyhounds and includes the topic of nutrition.

Licensed Persons (LPs) must ensure that all greyhounds are provided at least once daily, with food in sufficient quantity and nutritional quality to ensure optimal health.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.1

LPs must ensure that greyhounds maintain a healthy weight by weighing them regularly and/or checking that their Body Condition Score (BCS) is adequate for their physiological state and exercise levels (see Appendix 1).

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.2

Food must be canine-appropriate and meet the daily requirements for the greyhound's age, size, physical and physiological condition, and level of activity.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.3

Food must be stored in such a way as to prevent spoilage, or contamination, or access by rodents and pests. Uneaten food must be disposed of before a fresh meal is provided.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.4

Food fed to greyhounds must not contain raw offal unless the food, which must only contain minimal offal, has been deep frozen and adequately thawed prior to feeding.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.5

LPs must ensure they have adequate food available on site to always meet the needs of all greyhounds in their care, including in the event of an emergency where access to supply may be restricted.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.6

Food bowls, food storage containers and food preparation and storage areas must be kept clean and hygienic.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.7

Unless directed otherwise by a veterinarian, greyhounds must be regularly provided with raw meaty bones (of a size large enough as to not be a risk of swallowing and/or causing a foreign body) and/or chew toys to promote good dental health.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.8

GREYHOUND DIET REQUIREMENTS

An adequate and balanced diet are the cornerstones of performance in the racing greyhound and will aim to meet the optimum health and body condition requirements of the greyhound as well as providing sufficient energy and 'building blocks' to manage its athletic and exercise needs.

The amount of food required for greyhounds will depend on several factors:

- age and physiological status e.g. young and still growing, pregnant or lactating, adult, or senior adult
- health status
- exercise requirements e.g. training or racing, spelling, retired, breeding
- quality of the food
- environmental temperature and living conditions.

The **GRNZ Rules of Racing** require that greyhounds' weight must be maintained within 4% of its previous start weight (see LR101A Weight variation). This rule requires LPs to carefully manage energy and water balance according to the individual greyhound's exercise outputs and the current climatic conditions.

A greyhound's Body Condition Score should be monitored regularly and greyhounds regularly weighed and feed adjusted accordingly.

Greyhounds have higher energy demands than other dog breeds which means they need more calories per kilogram of body weight. Greyhounds use fats as their primary source of energy, followed by carbohydrates. Protein is important for growth and repair and regeneration of muscle. Different studies have investigated the ideal balance of protein, fat and carbohydrates in greyhound diets to optimise racing performance. These studies^{1,2} suggest that a diet providing 20-45% of energy from protein and 40-50% of energy from fat is the most efficient diet for the racing greyhound.

The Code of Welfare for Dogs contains the following general advice regarding the proportion of a maintenance diet to be fed to dogs with different metabolic needs.

Table 1 Guide to amount of food relative to maintenance ration (M) needed for dogs and bitches in work and breeding

Dogs in work	
Light exercise	1.5 x Maintenance (M)
Medium exercise	2.0 x M
Heavy exercise	3.0 x M
Bitches	
Late pregnancy	2.5 x M
Lactation	3.0 x M

Please note this is guidance only and expert advice should be sought where there is any uncertainty.

¹ Hill RC, Bloomberg MS, Legrand-Defretin V, et al. (2000). Maintenance energy requirements and the effect of diet on performance of racing greyhounds. *Am J Vet Res*, 61: 1566-1573.

² Hill RC, Lewis DD, Scott KC, et al. (2001). Effect of increased dietary protein and decreased dietary carbohydrate on performance and body composition in racing greyhounds. *Am J Vet Res*, 62: 440-447.

Further detailed advice on greyhound nutrition can be found in Appendix 2: Greyhound Nutrition and Hydration of the [Code of Practice for Greyhound Residential Kennels](#) produced by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain.

WHAT'S IN A BALANCED DIET?

The main goal of any diet is to provide an optimal balance of carbohydrates, fats and protein with sufficient vitamins and minerals to maintain health and performance. Many trainers mix their own feed, but did you know it can be very difficult to correctly estimate the protein, fat and carbohydrate contents in raw meat, and to balance a raw food diet?

Vitamins and minerals are essential to maintaining strong bones, a healthy immune system, healthy skin and nervous system, and supporting energy metabolism. It can be difficult to ensure the correct balance of minerals, especially calcium and phosphorus, is in a raw meat diet. These are critical throughout a greyhound's life to support optimum skeletal growth (strong, healthy bones) and maintain skeletal strength and muscle function. Did you know that calcium is a key component required for muscle contraction (movement)? If muscles do not have sufficient calcium they cannot move as fast or as well as they should. A greyhound with insufficient calcium in their diet will not be a successful racing dog and may be prone to developmental bone disorders and injuries.

Traditionally, most trainers feed a mix of raw meat and kibble and vegetables to their greyhounds. However, mounting evidence suggests that the risks of including raw meat in a greyhound's diet may outweigh the benefits. Raw meat, especially those containing a mix of offal, comes with risks of bacterial, parasite and chemical contamination. Chemical contaminants can include veterinary drugs, which may be prohibited substances under the Rules. A study³ investigating the prevalence of parasitic infection within Australian racing greyhound populations detected several parasites which are contracted through the consumption of raw meat.

Nutritional imbalance and quality control are also issues with raw meat diets, as batches of meat may differ in their fat and protein percentages. The escalating cost of meat means that feeding optimum quality, human grade meat to racing greyhounds is out of reach for most LPs. A good quality kibble can be affordable and offers other benefits.

Premium kibble diets are formulated by nutritionists to provide balanced levels of essential amino acids (the building blocks for protein), fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. The nutritional information available on premium dry food packaging allows for a high level of consistency and accuracy when feeding.

Did you know that a premium kibble diet can:

- save you time and money;
- provide a consistent and nutritionally balanced diet; and
- ensure that your greyhound's feed is free of contaminants and infectious agents?

³ Ash A, Paul A, Lymbery A (2016). Investigating gastrointestinal parasites within the Australian Racing Greyhound: Baseline prevalences and considerations for drug efficacy and parasite control methods. School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University, Perth, WA.

FEEDING FOR OPTIMUM DENTAL (AND MENTAL) HEALTH

Greyhounds must be provided with dental chews or large raw, meaty bones regularly to help maintain healthy teeth and gums. Chewing bones or chews helps to remove tartar build-up on teeth and prevent periodontal disease developing.

Chewing is also a form of enrichment for greyhounds, which many dogs find very rewarding and enjoyable. This can provide for positive mental states in greyhounds and improve welfare outcomes.

Chewing bones can also be a source of additional calcium, on top of a well-balanced diet. Care must be taken to select bones which are not able to be swallowed and which do not easily splinter or have sharp edges or points which may lead to injury or intestinal obstructions. Seek advice if you are unsure and always watch greyhounds when you are introducing bones for the first time. Cooked bones should never be fed to dogs as they are brittle, and often sharp, or easily broken and swallowed.

Be aware of competition between greyhounds for high value items when feeding bones or chews, and ensure that there are no reasons for, or opportunities to fight over bones or toys, especially in younger greyhounds.

FOOD HYGIENE

Food preparation and storage areas must be kept clean and hygienic to avoid bacterial contamination and avoid the introduction of pests, parasites and contaminants.

Frozen food must be kept in a functional freezer and remain frozen until use. Never re-freeze meat which has thawed. Frozen meat should be properly thawed prior to feeding but not allowed to stand out at room temperature following thaw, as spoilage bacteria may contaminate the meat and make it unsafe to eat. If you are unsure if the raw, thawed meat is safe to feed, it is best to cook the meat to above 70° C and then cool prior to feeding.

Fresh food should be stored in a refrigerator <4° C.

Dry feed should be kept in a sealed container to prevent vermin access.