

Greyhound Racing New Zealand Report for the Minister for Racing Q4 2021/22

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Minister for Racing for the fourth quarter (Q4, 1 May 2022-31 July 2022) of the 2021/22 racing season, with particular reference to comparisons between the 2021/22 racing season (1 August 2021-31 July 2022) and the 2020/21 racing season (1 August 2020-31 July 2021).

Background

2. GRNZ submitted its first quarterly report to the Minister for Racing in December 2021 following the Robertson Review.
3. GRNZ submitted its second quarterly report to the Minister for Racing in April 2022.
4. GRNZ submitted its third quarterly report to the Minister for Racing in July 2022.
5. GRNZ's first, second and third quarterly reports have been published on the GRNZ website.
6. This fourth quarterly report will contain injury and rehoming data up to and including 31 July 2022 and will contain information around additional activities which have taken place up to and including 31 August 2022.

Raceday Euthanasias

7. In the 2021/22 racing season, seven greyhounds were euthanised at a racetrack after competing in a race. This equates to 0.2 euthanasias per 1000 starts. There were no raceday deaths.
8. In the 2020/21 racing season, 26 greyhounds were euthanised and another died at a racetrack after competing in a race, which equates to 0.6 deaths per 1000 starts.
9. The decline in raceday euthanasias is due to a range of factors, including investment in track safety and infrastructure, and the success of the GRNZ Rehabilitation to Rehoming Programme (RTR), where GRNZ removes economics from the decision by paying for the rehabilitation of greyhounds injured on raceday who may have otherwise been euthanised. Further comprehensive information on the RTR Programme has been provided in previous quarterly reports.
10. It should be noted that we have not included euthanasias following official trials on raceday in these numbers (as the variables within a race are often different to those within a trial); however, two greyhounds were euthanised at a racetrack following trials in the 2021/22 racing season.
11. Figure 1 below shows the rate of raceday euthanasias/deaths following a race, per 1000 starts per season since the 2015/16 season.

Racetrack euthanasias/deaths, following a race, per 1000 starts since Q1 2015/2016

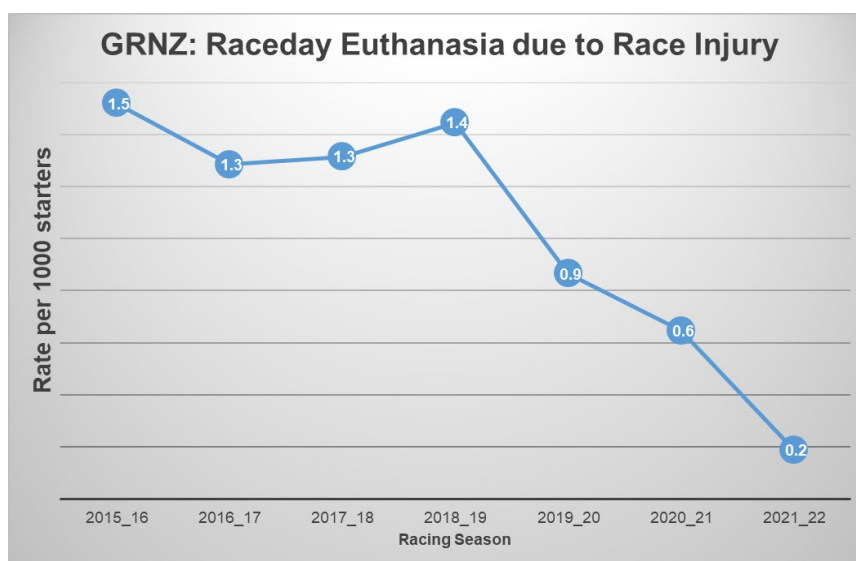


Figure 1

Non-Racing Deaths

12. In the 2021/22 season, 122 greyhounds (both racing and unraced dogs) were euthanised by veterinarians for a medical reason, compared to 105 in the 2020/21 season, as shown in Figure 2 below. This is an increase of 17. Of the 122 greyhounds, 60 were euthanised due to illness, and 62 were euthanised due to accident or injury.
13. There were 10 behavioural euthanasias due to aggression in the 2021/22 season, compared with 21 behavioural euthanasias due to aggression in the 2020/21 season.
14. In the 2021/22 season, there were 94 reported deaths. Of these, 6 were due to accident or injury, and 88 were due to illness, age or natural causes. This was an increase of 28 on the previous season.

Mortality Data (Non-Racing)				
2021/22 Season		Mortality Type & Cause	2020/21 Season	
Count	%		Count	%
		Euthanasia		
10	7.6%	Behavioural Euthanasia-Aggression	21	15.4%
60	45.5%	Medical Euthanasia-Illness	47	34.6%
62	47.0%	Medical Euthanasia-Accident/Injury	58	42.6%
0	0.0%	Unnecessary Euthanasia	10	7.4%
132	100.0%	Total	136	100.0%
		Death (incl. Aged Euthanasia)		
6	6.4%	Accident / Injury	6	9.1%
88	93.6%	Illness, Age or Natural Causes	60	90.9%
94	100.0%	Total	66	100.0%

Figure 2

Closer Examination of Deaths and Euthanasias

15. GRNZ has been working closely with the Racing Integrity Board (RIB) around auditing death certificates.
16. The RIB has provided GRNZ with an analysis of death certificates from 1 August 2021 until 31 July 2022. Items discussed in this analysis include:
 - A “significant reduction” in the number of greyhounds being euthanised since May 2022.
 - There are some missing/late/incorrect vet certificates. Licensed Persons (LPs) have now been reminded of their obligations to provide accurate and adequate information in a timely fashion.

Euthanasia Policy

17. As outlined in our Q3 Quarterly Report, a Draft Euthanasia Policy was put forward for the GRNZ Board’s consideration at their May board meeting.
18. GRNZ has now completed consultation with LPs and is continuing the consultation process with other interested and affected parties, including the RIB, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) and rehoming groups.
19. Once consultation with the remaining stakeholders is complete, GRNZ will implement the Euthanasia Policy.

Raceday Injuries

20. The reported raceday injury or euthanasia rate for the 2021/22 season is 21.9 per 1000 starts.
21. Figure 3 below shows the injury category and stand downs for the 2021/22 season and the 2020/21 season.
22. Last season saw an increase of minor injuries incurring 1-10 day stand downs (365 compared to 356). This is partially attributable to Preferred Box Draw Races (discussed below), which have a higher rate of minor injury occurrence.
23. There were seven raceday euthanasias or sudden deaths in the 2021/22 season compared to 27 in the previous season. This is a decrease of 20. At the same time, the number of Major II injuries (incurring stand downs of more than 42 days) has increased from 56 to 72. This increase is largely attributable to the RTR programme, as noted at Point 9 above, in that greyhounds who may have previously been euthanised after suffering Major II injuries are now able to be successfully rehabilitated and rehomed. GRNZ is committed to researching the long-term effects on greyhounds who have been through the RTR Programme and monitoring outcomes.

Injury Category and Stand Down 2021/22 Racing Season and Injury Category & Stand Down 2020/21 Racing Season

2021/22		Injury Category by Stand Down	2020/21	
37354 Starters			41743 Starters	
Count	per 1000		Count	per 1000
365	9.8	Minor 1-10 days	356	8.5
205	5.5	Medium 11-21 days	269	6.4
170	4.6	Major I 22-42 days	210	5.0
72	1.9	Major II more than 42 days	56	1.3
7	0.2	Euthanised by vet on track or sudden death	27	0.6
819	21.9	Total Veterinary Exams detecting Injury	918	22.0

Figure 3

Measures to Investigate, Review and Reduce Raceday Injuries

Preferred Box Draw Races

24. As mentioned in our previous quarterly report, GRNZ introduced a Preferred Box Draw (PBD) pilot at Addington Raceway in late April 2022. The idea of PBD races is assigning greyhounds to their preferred boxes according to their early racing traits, thus reducing the occurrence of collisions and injuries.
25. The pilot was soon expanded to C1 sprinters around the country, and eventually all C1 sprint races were made PBD by default.
26. PBD racing gives GRNZ the ability to adjust a greyhound's early racing trait upon reviewing its races, thus ensuring it has the most suitable box draw at its next start. Before PBD, GRNZ had no avenue to make any such adjustments.
27. GRNZ is now exploring possible rule changes to allow for reserves to be included in PBD races.
28. Figure 4 below shows the injuries per 1000 starts between 26 April 2022 and 31 August 2022, comparing random box draw races and PBD races. The most encouraging aspect so far is the reduction in the rate of injuries incurring stand downs of 22 days or more from 6.5 per 1000 starts to 4.5 per 1000 starts.

Injuries per 1000 starts since 26 April 2022 - 31 July 2022 (races between 290m and 420m)

Injuries per 1000 starts since 26Apr2022								
2021/22 Season		PBD & Random Draw Races between 290m and 420m						
	Starters	1-10 days	11-21 days	22-42 days	43-90 days	Euth/Died	Total	>21 days
PBD	1329	13.5	3.8	3.0	1.5		21.8	4.5
Random	6043	12.9	5.1	4.5	1.7	0.3	24.5	6.5

Figure 4

Track Safety

29. Following extensive consultation and receipt of several independent expert reports, the renovation of Hatrick Raceway commenced at the beginning of August. Once the track renovation is complete, racing will be gradually reintroduced at Hatrick Raceway. The track will require a period of consolidation to allow the surface to be consistent and safest for racing purposes. Greyhounds will also require a period of familiarisation after not having raced at Hatrick Raceway for over a year. It is anticipated that racing will recommence at Hatrick Raceway before the end of the 2022 calendar year.
30. In addition to the renovation of Hatrick Raceway, construction of the straight track adjacent to Hatrick Raceway (on the Wanganui Jockey Club thoroughbred racecourse) is set to commence in October. There have been some slight delays with construction getting underway, which has mainly been due to ensuring the correct legal documentation is in place, including Memorandums of Understanding and Deeds of Lease. It is anticipated that racing will commence at the Wanganui straight track in April 2023.
31. Prior to construction commencing on the straight track, the project manager and engineer went to Australia to visit the Capalaba straight track. Their findings will help to inform the construction of the Wanganui straight track.
32. Based on overseas research and injury statistics, GRNZ is confident that once the straight track is fully operational, our serious injury figures will reduce, owing to the fact that greyhounds will not have to round any bends, where most collisions/accidents/falls occur. We will be monitoring injury and fall statistics closely.
33. As mentioned in our previous quarterly report, Professor David Eager (University of Technology Sydney) and Scott Robins have now provided track reports on all New Zealand greyhounds tracks, aside from Ascot Park (due to flight cancellations). GRNZ is currently working through the findings of these track reports and preparing a strategy for implementing recommendations.
34. Extended lure arms have now been deployed at Cambridge Raceway and Manukau Stadium to reduce the risk of crowding and collisions.

Engagement of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

35. GRNZ has engaged the services of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) on an ongoing basis. Professor David Eager is the Professor of Risk Management and Injury Prevention at UTS.
36. Professor David Eager is a subject matter expert on greyhound track design and injury prevention, and GRNZ is pleased to be able to utilise his and his PhD students' expertise in injury data analysis and modelling, particularly with regards to our own tracks and ways of preventing and reducing greyhound injuries.

Track Minimum Standards and Animal Welfare Strategy

37. As mentioned in the previous quarterly report, Dr. Michelle Ledger continues to develop a set of track minimum standards for the preparation, maintenance and monitoring of safe tracks and is consulting with experts within NZ and Australia to develop these further. This progress is tied into gathering of baseline readings from the new blue-tooth enabled Clegg Hammers and moisture readings currently being entered into the dedicated system, developed by GRNZ and the New Zealand Sports Turf Institute, for maintaining real-time track monitoring data for all greyhound tracks in New Zealand. The standards will also be guided by Professor David Eager and Scott Robins' reports.

38. Similarly, Dr. Michelle Ledger continues to develop an overarching Welfare Strategy for the Industry 2022-25, incorporating data from RIB audit reports, track reports and current industry data to inform strategic priorities.

Serious Injury Review Committee Update

39. The Serious Injury Review Committee (SIRC) held its second meeting on 18 August 2022.

40. At its second meeting, matters discussed included:

- In order to become more proactive and preventative, the SIRC will now meet every six weeks, instead of quarterly.
- Greyhounds returning from a break of 21 days or more continues to be a consistent injury risk factor. This will be addressed at the Animal Welfare Workshop on 17 September in Christchurch and all LPs will be provided with educational material around this.
- Weight variations since last start are a potential injury risk factor. However, it may not be as straightforward as scratching greyhounds whose weight varies by over a kg; percentage body weight may be more appropriate. This will be explored further.
- Racing frequencies, including low and high racing frequencies and the ways these can potentially affect injury risks.
- Age at time of injury: older greyhounds are the highest proportional risk factor. The possibility of introducing Masters races (ie for aged greyhounds) will be explored with an appropriate racing frequency associated with their age class.
- PBD races: Members of the SIRC will investigate the apparent increase in 1-10 day injuries sustained in these races and will report back as to the nature of these injuries or whether a reporting bias exists due to the frequency of examinations requested.
- Members of the SIRC to draft a Return to Racing Policy, specifically designed at reducing risk in greyhounds returning to race following a 21-day break from racing or longer.
- Members of the SIRC to develop a more predictive injury risk model, which could identify “watch lists” of greyhounds with high existing and/or increasing risk factors.

GRNZ Animal Health and Welfare Committee Update

41. The GRNZ Animal Health and Welfare Committee (AHWC) continues to meet regularly. Since the last quarterly report, the AHWC met on 22 June 2022 and again on 27 July 2022.

42. GRNZ continues to publish the minutes of the AHWC meetings on its website as they become available.

43. Two observers continue to join the AHWC meetings; namely Dr. Mairi Stewart (Animal Health and Welfare Consultant and contracted to the RIB) and Dr. Gwyneth Verkerk (Chair of NAWAC).

44. Items discussed at the most recent committee meetings include:

- Deregistered greyhounds under the care of an LP
- SIRC recommendations
- Intensity of racing
- Euthanasia policy
- Preferred Box Draw update
- Draft injury reduction strategy, which has been developed by Dr. Michelle Ledger

45. Additionally, the AHWC receives reports on a range of matters, and discusses all of them at its meetings, such as injuries and deaths, rehoming, industry education fact sheets and audit reports from the RIB.
46. All AHWC recommendations are presented to the GRNZ Board for discussion and sign-off.

Vaccinations

47. As mentioned in previous quarterly reports, since 1 March 2022, greyhounds in New Zealand must be fully vaccinated in order to race in New Zealand. This vaccination mandate puts New Zealand's greyhound industry ahead of its Australian counterparts in this area.
48. GRNZ continues to work through the challenges of mandating vaccinations for non-racing greyhounds, including retired pets adopted by trainers. It is anticipated that an update of our rules, which is expected to take place prior to the end of the 2022 calendar year, will allow this to be implemented.
49. As of 1 September 2022, no litters are able to be registered with GRNZ without proof of puppy vaccinations.

Population Management Model

50. The RIB-developed population model has been updated for Q4 of the 2021/22 season and is now complete.
51. GRNZ is currently in the process of reviewing the RIB's insights and conclusions drawn from the model.
52. To aid in the process of reviewing and implementing the model, a population analyst will shortly commence working for GRNZ.

Kennel Audits and RIB Inspections

53. By the end of the 2021/22 racing session, all LPs who required an audit had been visited (131).
54. As at 9 September 2022, 1152 improvement notices had been issued in total, with 464 outstanding. As of that date, 50 LPs had fully closed out their audits.
55. The most issued improvement notices are:
 - Failure to keep/unsatisfactory recording of treatments
 - Failure to have documented emergency procedures
 - Misalignment of dogs present/missing with GRNZ records
 - Aspect of the facilities presenting a safety risk to greyhounds
 - Vaccinations records unavailable
 - Vaccinations not current
56. GRNZ and the RIB are following up with all LPs who are yet to close out their audits.
57. During a kennel audit, a welfare breach was discovered at the property of a trainer, which resulted in the euthanasia of a breeding female. GRNZ fully supported the ensuing investigation conducted by the RIB, and the offending trainer was subsequently disqualified for two years.
58. Separately, the RIB attended another kennel as a result of information they received, and during this visit, greyhounds were found in unsatisfactory living conditions. GRNZ acted promptly once they received this information and relocated the greyhounds to another suitable property within hours of being alerted. GRNZ fully supported the ensuing investigation conducted by the RIB, and the offending trainers were subsequently disqualified for two years and fined \$2,000.

Increase in Methamphetamine Positives

59. There was an increase in the number of methamphetamine positives detected in the 2021/22 racing season.
60. In the 2021/22 racing season, there were 37,354 starters, of which 4,066 were routinely tested for prohibited substances. This equates to 10.9% of starters being tested, an increase on previous seasons. In the 2020/21 racing season, 9.5% of starters were tested, in the 2019/20 racing season, 7.8% of starters were tested and in the 2018/19 racing season, 8.0% of starters were tested.
61. In the 2021/22 racing season, four greyhounds who were tested returned positive results for methamphetamine. This equates to 0.098 % of all greyhounds who were tested. This is an increase in methamphetamine positive results on the previous two racing seasons (two positives in 2020/21, zero in 2019/20).
62. GRNZ fully supports investigations into all positive results and any resulting outcomes. GRNZ is aware that methamphetamine use is becoming increasingly prevalent in New Zealand and it is important that the rigorous testing programme is continued.
63. To date, none of the methamphetamine positives have been identified as deliberate administration, but due to the welfare risks of methamphetamine to both humans and animals, GRNZ continues with its zero-tolerance stance.
64. Registered racing greyhounds are the only dog breed in New Zealand which are routinely tested for prohibited substances, including recreational drugs like methamphetamine. GRNZ continues to remind trainers of the importance of vigilance to prevent contamination occurring.

Health and Welfare Standards and Policies

65. As previously mentioned, the GRNZ Health and Welfare Standards are currently under review, with a full draft of the new proposed standards to be provided to the AHCW in September.
66. A small focus group of trainers have been consulted with regards to the new draft Health and Welfare Standards. Wider consultation will commence in October, to ensure that the new Health and Welfare Standards are fit for purpose and all impacted stakeholders have an opportunity to be heard.
67. Wider consultation on the Hot Weather Racing and Travelling Policy will also commence in October 2022.

Rules

68. GRNZ has been reviewing its Rules of Racing throughout the year. This has been a lengthy process and it is anticipated that the priority rules will be implemented on 1 December 2022.

KPIs

69. GRNZ is in the process of finalising a robust set of KPIs and will make these publicly available as soon as they are finalised. These KPIs will then be reported on annually in our Statement of Service Performance in our future Annual Reports.

Education

70. A GRNZ Animal Welfare Workshop will take place on 17 September 2022, featuring a range of guest speakers and topics. This Workshop will be filmed and made available online.
71. GRNZ is currently planning a Continuous Professional Development Programme, with the majority of LP categories required to demonstrate knowledge in order to maintain their licences in the 2023/24 season.

Rehoming

72. Between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022, 521 greyhounds were rehomed through the GRNZ Great Mates Rehoming Programme.
73. Between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022, 59 greyhounds were privately rehomed, or the owner kept the greyhound as a pet processed through the GRNZ Great Mates Rehoming Programme. GRNZ is still drafting processes which will improve the oversight of where greyhounds go after they retire from racing.
74. The Great Mates waiting list has been steadily increasing in recent months, and GRNZ has been looking at ways to increase capacity and reduce the waiting list. Increases to capacity have been made at the four existing Great Mates facilities, while an additional South Island site will be brought on in the near future, which will add approximately 17 kennels.
75. GRNZ recognises that increased waiting lists places financial strain on trainers, and so has started providing a daily subsidy to trainers whose greyhounds are on the waiting list for 60 days or more.
76. In recognition of the increased waiting lists, GRNZ has also commenced a rehoming marketing campaign in partnership with MediaWorks. This campaign comprises a three-month marketing push via billboards and radio advertising.
77. As previously mentioned, the RTR Programme is a GRNZ-funded programme, where all greyhounds who suffer serious injuries at the track are rehabilitated back to health before they enter the rehoming programme. Between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022, 50 greyhounds were adopted after their rehabilitation was complete.
78. GRNZ has been developing new rehoming software enhancements, which will provide GRNZ with better data insights on the shorter-term impacts of the RTR Programme on greyhounds. According to reports, 182 days is the average length of time from a greyhound entering RTR to being adopted. There are some restrictions on these reports, including the fact that greyhounds are not included who have completed rehabilitation but have not yet been adopted.
79. A draft framework on RTR policy settings is currently being developed.
80. A new comprehensive greyhound vet health checklist is being developed by vets, specialists and GRNZ to ensure that every greyhound coming out of the industry receives a full warrant of fitness. This will also provide GRNZ with good data with regards to kennels which may not be adhering to the GRNZ Health and Welfare Standards and require follow-up.
81. Rehoming partner Nightrave Greyhounds now has 15 permanent kennels dedicated to special adoptions at their new base in Homewood.
82. As mentioned in the previous quarterly report, GRNZ worked with rehoming agencies and an independent company to formulate a survey to be distributed to owners who have adopted a greyhound from the industry. This has now been distributed to all rehoming agencies and we anticipate that the responses received will provide invaluable information with regards to the long-term effects of both rehoming and rehabilitation, and provide insights around the actual adoption process.

Media Coverage

83. GRNZ regularly maintains its website with industry stories.
84. GRNZ continues to have a partnership with NZME, which entitles GRNZ to a minimum of one greyhound story weekly on its website. Statistics provided by NZME show that these greyhound articles are regularly read by around 1,000 readers every week.
85. GRNZ continues to have a partnership with SENZ, which entitles GRNZ to radio advertising, radio crosses, and a one-hour flagship show on a Sunday afternoon.
86. GRNZ has commenced a partnership with MediaWorks, through which GRNZ is promoting the Great Mates Rehoming Programme via billboard and radio advertising.
87. GRNZ always responds quickly to all media inquiries.
88. GRNZ continues to work hard to ensure accurate information is circulated about the industry and corrects misinformation where appropriate.
89. GRNZ currently has official complaints sitting with both the Broadcasting Standards Authority and the New Zealand Media Council.

—ENDS—