

GRNZ Rehabilitation to Rehoming (RtR) Policy

1 February 2023 (updated 10 May 2023)

Background

This Policy is an important part of Greyhound Racing New Zealand's (GRNZ) ongoing commitment to improving welfare outcomes for racing greyhounds, which may suffer a serious injury while racing or trialling on New Zealand greyhound tracks.

GRNZ recognises that serious injuries require advanced diagnostic imaging, and may require complex surgery and prolonged rehabilitation times. The RtR Policy enables Licensed Persons (LPs) to obtain an accurate off-track diagnosis and prognosis for their seriously injured greyhound, so that a fully informed decision on appropriate treatment options or euthanasia can be made. The RtR Policy will provide funding for surgical treatments for greyhounds which have a good prognosis for return to a pet life following treatment.

Post-surgical rehabilitation of seriously injured greyhounds is a crucial part of the recovery process which not all LPs are able to perform. To ensure that the greyhound recovers fully from the injury and returns to a life with normal function, a rehabilitation programme with specialist services including physiotherapy, massage and hydrotherapy during the recovery period is recommended.

The RtR Policy facilitates access to GRNZ's rehabilitation care facilities and services for the duration of the first 12-16 weeks following an injury. This ensures that all RtR greyhounds have the best chance of making a full recovery.

1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The RtR Policy covers treatment and rehabilitation for all eligible injuries in greyhounds racing and trialling at tracks licensed by GRNZ. It also provides for the cost of initial veterinary assessment for injuries which are suspected to be eligible, but which may be confirmed to be non-eligible for treatment costs, following diagnostic tests.

Eligible injuries under the Policy are:

1. Any bone fracture except a single metacarpal or metatarsal fracture, a toe (phalangeal and/or sesamoid) fracture or a tail fracture; or

2. Any joint dislocation above and including the wrist or hock, so does not include a metacarpal-phalangeal or metatarsal-phalangeal dislocation, a toe dislocation or a tail dislocation; or
3. A complete Achilles tendon rupture or severe ligament rupture; or
4. Any other injury or medical condition where on-track euthanasia may otherwise be considered appropriate in accordance with the On-Track Euthanasia Guidelines.

Examples of eligible injuries covered by the Policy include:

- long bone fractures
- spinal, pelvic or skull injuries
- major fracture dislocations, and all joint dislocation above and including the wrist or hock (ankle)
- fractures of complex joints i.e. hock and carpus
- Achilles tendon ruptures
- multiple metacarpals and/or metatarsal fractures (foot)
- acute tooth avulsions or major tooth fractures occurring during a racing or trialling accident
- severe eye injuries occurring during racing or trialling
- severe lacerations occurring during racing or trialling
- an acute medical condition i.e. GDV, cardiac failure, respiratory failure or other serious systemic condition occurring at a track which requires immediate off-track assessment and does not meet the requirements for immediate euthanasia under the On-Track Euthanasia Guidelines.

Non-eligible injuries

Injuries not eligible for treatment and rehabilitation under this Policy will still be eligible for funding towards the cost of initial veterinary diagnostics, to confirm a diagnosis and ensure the welfare of injured greyhounds is protected.

GRNZ will cover the cost of initial veterinary treatments, diagnostics and stabilisation up to \$2,000 (incl. GST) and will not cover the costs of further treatment for non-eligible injuries/conditions.

Examples of injuries not covered under this scheme (this does not mean these injuries will not require further veterinary treatment off-track) include:

- a single metacarpal or metatarsal fracture
- a toe (phalangeal and/or sesamoid) fracture
- a tail fracture
- a metacarpal-phalangeal or metatarsal-phalangeal dislocation
- a toe dislocation
- a tail dislocation.

If the injury does not meet the eligibility criteria outlined above, the LP having responsibility for the care of the greyhound will be responsible for the collection, treatment, and care of the dog, through its rehabilitation time, until they are able to enter the Rehoming programme or are declared fit to resume racing. The cost of the initial consultation, diagnostics and treatment will be covered by GRNZ under this Policy but any further treatment will be the LP's responsibility.

The on-track veterinarians (OTVs) will advise the LP of their greyhound's eligibility under the scheme at the time of diagnosing and stabilising the injury.

The Club Official will notify the relevant RtR co-ordinator for that track to facilitate immediate treatment of the injured greyhound off-track. A copy of the RtR programme application form and Veterinary Examination Details form, listing all treatments administered to the greyhound by the OTV, must accompany the greyhound to the treating veterinarian off-track.

If the injury is sustained during Club trials, the Greyhound Club Manager or other Club Official will report the injury to GRNZ (via email to rehomeing@grnz.co.nz) to facilitate access to the RtR programme.

The LP may self-assess their eligibility and contact the relevant RtR co-ordinator for that track to facilitate immediate treatment of the injured greyhound. Appropriate First Aid must be provided to the injured greyhound before transport to a veterinary facility for treatment.

2. Funding under the Policy

Initial diagnostics and stabilisation

The Policy funding will cover the costs of the initial veterinary consultation, further stabilisation, diagnostic imaging; and other diagnostic tests required to enable the successful treatment of the injury to the value of \$2,000 (including GST) for both eligible and non-eligible injuries.

Treatment costs

Once the treatment options are known and prognosis is established, all surgical treatments to the value of \$5,000 (including GST) per greyhound, will be automatically covered.

Where a decision is taken to euthanise the greyhound, due to poor prognosis or complications arising, this will also be covered under the Policy, providing that diagnostic imaging has been performed which supports the prognosis provided. Certification as per the GRNZ Euthanasia Policy applies.

Additional funding – approval required

Additional funding may be made available in exceptional cases, where:

- The treating veterinarian confirms that the injury is an eligible injury with an acceptable welfare prognosis following treatment; and
- The reasonable veterinary costs of subsequent treatment (including after-care), in conjunction with the cost of the initial veterinary consultation, are expected to materially exceed \$5,000 (including GST) – such as where multiple surgeries or specialist surgery are required and/or the case is complex.

Approval for exceptional cases should be sought after the veterinarian has completed Part C of the application form and this has been forwarded to GRNZ (via email to rehoming@grnz.co.nz).

3. RtR application process

Part A: On-Track Veterinarian (OTV)

The OTV will complete the greyhound's details, the injury description and treatments administered in Part A of the RtR programme admission form. The Club Officials will then contact the relevant RtR co-ordinator responsible for that track to assist with arranging further treatment for the greyhound.

Part B: Licensed Person (LP) in charge of the greyhound

The LP will complete Part B of the application form with their intentions for the greyhound and sign the treatment consent and waiver. LPs can contact GRNZ in writing within seven (7) days of the injury, should LPs have a change of mind regarding their notified intentions, allowing LPs additional time to consider their options, below:

Relinquish greyhound to RtR and Great Mates

- Where the greyhound is relinquished to enter Great Mates via the RtR programme, it will be deregistered from racing and ownership will revert to Great Mates, who will rehabilitate the greyhound and prepare it for life as a pet.
- The greyhound will be desexed prior to rehoming at the end of its rehabilitation period.
- All decisions regarding surgery, euthanasia or other treatment options will be the responsibility of Great Mates and made according to their established processes and decision trees (see Appendix 1).
- LPs will be kept informed of the diagnosis, prognosis and treatment options during the seven days cooling-off period.

Retain ownership and admit to RtR for treatment only, or rehabilitation only

- LPs may wish to have GRNZ cover the treatment costs under the RtR Policy and complete their own rehabilitation period. A subsidy for rehabilitation is available for a period upon request.
- LPs may wish to co-ordinate their own off-track treatment and admit the greyhound for rehabilitation (12-16 weeks) following treatment.

Retain ownership and admit to RtR for full rehabilitation – intent to race or breed in future

- The LP will retain ownership of the greyhound and the greyhound will be returned to them following the rehabilitation period.
- The LP will need to sign the treatment consent and liability waiver for the time their greyhound is being treated in the RtR programme.
- The RtR coordinator will inform the LP, in Part B of the form, of the outcome of the initial off-track veterinary assessment, the prognosis, and the treatment plan for the greyhound.
- The LP, as the person in charge of the greyhound, will need to authorise any further treatment or euthanasia of the greyhound.

The form is then provided to the RtR co-ordinator, who will take it with the greyhound to the off-track veterinarian providing the initial diagnostics and treatment plan, to complete Part C of the form.

At Club trials, the Greyhound Club Manager or other relevant Club Official of the track where the injury was sustained, may complete Part A; and the LP should contact the RtR co-ordinator directly and complete Part B of the form.

4. Returning to race or breed following successful rehabilitation

Greyhounds returning to racing or breeding following RtR programme admission will require veterinary certification as to their fitness to do so.

LPs must provide the veterinary clearance certificate from the treating veterinarian which indicates that the greyhound is fit to resume racing. If considering breeding, they need to complete the GRNZ breeding female exemption application form.

LPs may be required to refund the costs of veterinary treatment covered by GRNZ, under the RtR Policy, should the greyhound return to commercial racing or breeding activities following approval. An estimate of costs can be requested by emailing rehoming@grnz.co.nz.

5. Off-track euthanasia

Should the off-track assessment reveal a poor prognosis, the greyhound may be euthanised on the advice of the treating veterinarian, who must complete a GRNZ Veterinary Euthanasia Certificate.

LPs retaining ownership will need to provide signed consent for euthanasia, which may be completed after the greyhound is euthanised, provided they have given verbal or text permission to the RtR co-ordinator at the time they are contacted.

For greyhounds relinquished to Great Mates; should complications arise during or following treatment under the RtR Policy, or at any stage during the rehabilitation process, the 'Ill-dog' decision tree will be used by an independent panel to determine whether euthanasia, amputation or further treatment is an appropriate course of action. The panels' decisions are based on veterinary advice and a matrix developed to assess these scenarios. (See Appendix 1.)

Appendix 1: RtR 'Ill-dog' decision tree

