

GREYHOUND RACING & WELFARE - HOT WEATHER POLICY & GUIDELINES

Policy adopted by the Board of Greyhound Racing Victoria on 24 December 2015 to take effect from 26 December 2015.

1. Introduction

The safety and welfare of greyhounds is of paramount concern for Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) in assessing whether a race meeting or individual races on a program should proceed, be delayed or abandoned in hot weather conditions.

This policy sets out the processes, procedures and guidelines to be followed by GRV staff, trainers, handlers, veterinarians and club officials in relation to greyhound race meetings and for Clubs conducting trial sessions in hot weather conditions.

GAR 86 (ag) provides that a person shall be guilty of an offence if they fail to comply with a policy adopted by a Controlling Body.

2. Background

It is clear that heat stress affects canines more severely than humans and some other animals. Canines sweat only through the pads of their feet and the pores on the tip of the nose. For their cooling, canines rely mostly on the evaporation of fluid from the lung when panting, which is reasonably efficient provided the humidity is not so high as to prevent effective evaporative cooling. So even in relatively low heat, a greyhound can still die from Heatstroke if the surrounding air remains still, and then becomes very humid.

GRV implements this policy to assist all participants, Stewards, club officials, veterinarians and the Clubs to ensure that greyhounds are properly cared for in circumstances of hot weather, including in their transportation to and from the racetrack.

The maximum temperature at which greyhound racing or trialling can be conducted has been set to not higher than 38 degrees Celsius.

3. Policy

3.1. Prior to Raceday

- (a) Following the close of nominations for a meeting (3-5 days prior to the meeting), the GRV Grader in conjunction with the GRV Racing Operations Manager will assess if there is an adverse maximum temperature forecast for the region for the scheduled day of the meeting.
- (b) The Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) through its website provides regularly updated weather information including thermal comfort and heat stress indicators using a calculated estimate of wet bulb global temperature. This information will be utilised in determining forecast temperatures for the area where the race meeting or trial session is to be conducted.
- (c) If a race meeting is scheduled to be conducted in the day or twilight timeslot and the official Bureau of Meteorology forecast maximum temperature for the area where the meeting is to be conducted is between 35 degrees Celsius and 38 degrees Celsius, options to reschedule the meeting to another morning or evening timeslot are assessed. This assessment will also take into account hourly weather forecast information (where available) and will also consider travel time to and from the racecourse.

- (d) If an alternative timeslot can be achieved, including switching timeslots with other Victorian meetings on that day in regions not expected to be impacted by heat, the meeting may be moved to another venue.
- (e) By no later than 3:00 pm on the day prior to the meeting, if the forecast maximum temperature for the area is 38 degrees or higher, the meeting will be cancelled, postponed or abandoned and all relevant parties (participants, clubs, media, wagering operators) are to be notified by SMS, email and/or phone as well as on Fasttrack, via their registered details.
- (f) No travel fees are payable to participants for meetings cancelled or abandoned due to hot weather conditions at or before the appointed scratching time on the day of the race meeting or trial session.

3.2. Penalty Free Scratching when GRV heat policy applies

- (a) If at 3:00 pm on the day prior to the meeting, or at anytime thereafter, the official forecast temperature for the area at the time the meeting is to be conducted is 32 degrees or higher, the meeting will be marked as “GRV heat policy applies” and trainers will be permitted to withdraw any of their competing greyhounds from the meeting without penalty, especially in circumstances where they cannot be transported to the track in air-conditioned facilities.
- (b) The application to scratch a greyhound due to hot weather must be made before the appointed scratching time by contacting GRV Member Services by telephone. If a greyhound becomes heat stressed after the appointed scratching time, it should be scratched for ‘illness’ and the normal 10 day penalty will be applied under GAR 23(4) and Stewards will require a veterinary certificate before any future nomination is accepted.
- (c) Once a meeting has been designated as “GRV heat policy applies”, only those dogs which are competing in races at the meeting are permitted to be brought to the racecourse.

3.3. Procedures on Raceday between Scratching Time and Kennelling

- (a) If at the appointed scratching time on the morning of the race meeting or any time thereafter, the official forecast temperature in the area where the meeting is to be conducted is expected to be 38 degrees Celsius or above also taking into account the travel time to and from the track, the Steward In Charge of the meeting will determine the abandonment or cancellation of the meeting. In the case of club trial sessions, the Club Manager should make the decision as to whether the trials should be abandoned.
- (b) The Steward In Charge may also determine to alter, cancel, or defer the race meeting in the case of other extreme weather conditions such as the result of a continuing series of hot days.

3.4. Travel Guidelines

- (a) On days when the forecast temperature is predicted to be 32 degrees or above, trainers are expected to only transport greyhounds to racetracks in air-conditioned transport facilities.
- (b) Participants are urged to ensure that their car or trailer is cool before greyhounds are loaded for transportation. A car can be started and air conditioned prior to leaving. Greyhounds could be hosed or towelled down with water prior to being placed in the car or trailer.
- (c) When planning transport to the track, it is advisable that the participant arrives as close as possible to the opening time of kennelling.
- (d) Participants are urged to provide their greyhounds with adequate water and ice. Fluids should be given to the greyhound before the journey. It is essential to carry adequate water and drinking containers, in case of delay or breakdown during the journey and for arrival on course.
- (e) Electrolyte intake may also assist the greyhound. Oral electrolytes can be given to the greyhound prior to kennelling providing they do not breach GAR 83A Raceday treatment. However, as dogs

maintain core body temperature by panting rather than sweating, the electrolyte loss is reduced. If electrolyte products are used they should be specifically formulated for greyhounds as other animal electrolyte products may contain higher concentrations of salt which may be detrimental to the greyhound.

- (f) Barking muzzles are not permitted and are not to be used during travel or at the racecourse on hot days as they restrict the ability of the greyhound to pant. Halter leads and nose straps may also be disallowed if they restrict the ability of the greyhound to pant.

3.5. On Track

- (a) Once on the racecourse, and after the greyhound has been offered fluids, it is advised to kennel the greyhound as quickly as possible. The kennels are the coolest place on the racecourse and are air-conditioned at all tracks in Victoria.
- (b) The trainer or authorised person responsible for the greyhound must notify the Stewards as soon as possible upon arrival on the racecourse of any greyhound that may be suffering from heat stress or heat stroke to ensure prompt veterinary attention as necessary.
- (c) The on-track Veterinarian (OTV) will check the condition of all greyhounds during the kennelling veterinary examination, ensuring they are not suffering from the effects of the heat and to be satisfied that they have been amply hydrated before being kennelled. Any greyhound that has lost more than 0.6kgs in weight since its previous start shall be subject to another Veterinary examination to determine whether the greyhound is fit to race.
- (d) Clubs must ensure that kennels are adequately equipped with cooling or air conditioning systems and that a responsible equipment maintenance strategy is adopted and observed. An annual service check of the air conditioning system should be undertaken no later than October.
- (e) Clubs are to ensure that kennel cooling systems are activated no less than three hours prior to the opening of kennelling for meetings where the GRV heat policy applies.
- (f) Clubs should be prepared with all staff, officials and facilities to open kennelling 30 mins earlier than normal.
- (g) Clubs are required to have ice, water and extra water hoses or several dual outlet hose apparatus available and connected close to the catching pen area and kennel area that allows all greyhounds quick access to water following a race or trial on days when the temperature may rise above 32 degrees Celsius.
- (h) Clubs are required to fit all kennel areas with a temperature and humidity logger to simultaneously measure and automatically record temperature and humidity. The Stewards are to observe and record the temperature in the kennelling area at the time of kennelling and immediately prior to the dogs leaving the kennel area for each race.
- (i) Officials will monitor closely all greyhounds in the kennels. Should any trainer, handler or staff have concerns over the welfare of a kennelled greyhound, he or she must contact the on-track Veterinarian and/or Stewards immediately.
- (j) The ideal temperature in the racing kennels is between 18 and 24 degrees Celsius.
- (k) If the temperature in the race kennels reaches 26 degrees Celsius, the Steward In Charge and on-track Veterinarian are to consult with the Club and if the temperature cannot be reduced promptly then the upcoming events for that meeting may be abandoned or postponed.
- (l) If during the running of the race meeting the ambient temperature is close to or exceeding 38 degrees Celsius, then the Steward In Charge is to consult with the on-track Veterinarian. In the first instance Stewards should delay the running of races if an official forecast drop in temperature is expected within a reasonable time (no more than 2 race times). If there is no reasonable expectation based on official forecasts of a drop in temperature, then the Steward In

Charge of the meeting will determine the abandonment or cancellation of the remainder meeting.

3.6. Cooling Vests

- (a) Trainers/Attendants will be permitted to use their own canine cooling vests at all times with their greyhounds, including when parading greyhounds to the boxes.
- (b) The decision as to whether or not to use a canine cooling vest will rest solely with the Trainer/Attendant, who will also be responsible for the vest at all times.

3.7. Race Time

- (a) When removed from their kennel for racing, greyhounds may receive water prior to racing under the direct supervision of an Official nominated by the Steward In Charge.
- (b) As far as is practicable, Officials, Veterinarians and attendants are required to watch the greyhounds urinate. If the urine is very dark or appears to contain blood (myoglobinuria or haematuria) then the greyhound should be subject to an immediate Veterinary examination to determine whether the greyhound is fit to race.
- (c) Officials are to ensure that greyhounds remain as long as possible in the kennels before start time. Greyhounds should not be paraded in the parade ring, but should proceed directly to the boxes, and at the conclusion of the race should be directed immediately to the closest hosing down/wash bay area.
- (d) At race meetings designated as Heat affected, under no circumstances is a greyhound to be taken to a "Race Presentation" until it has been given the opportunity for a drink and to be cooled down. In these circumstances, clubs should either cancel the presentation or move it to a suitable inside area.

3.8. Post Race/Trial

- (a) As soon as possible after the completion of the race or trial the greyhound should be offered water, but do not attempt to force water intake.
- (b) Hose the greyhound down immediately. Do not use very cold or ice water as this leads to a reflex constriction of the blood vessels and delayed evaporative cooling. The greyhound should be hosed until it shows signs of a decrease in its panting. It is important to pay attention to hosing the greyhound's feet, chest, head, neck, back and groin.
- (c) Trainers are encouraged to pay extra attention to the 'cool down' period after the race and to make use of all cooling facilities available to them to ensure their greyhound is comfortable.
- (d) Give the greyhound a walk around, then re-hose with water, give the greyhound a drink and return to the kennels and ensure they are not soaking wet to remove the warmer water from their coat and to minimise any significant increases in humidity within their kennel that may reduce the effectiveness of evaporative cooling from panting.
- (e) In situations where the temperature exceeds 32 degrees, all greyhounds after racing are required to remain on course in a cool area in the vicinity of the kennels for at least 30 minutes during cool down before they are permitted to leave the course and at no stage are greyhounds to be loaded into their transportation until such time as they are leaving the racecourse.
- (f) The trainer or authorised person responsible for the greyhound must notify the Stewards as soon as possible of any greyhound that may be suffering from heat stress or heat stroke to ensure prompt veterinary attention as necessary.

3.9. Return Journey

- (a) The return journey home may well require the same consideration for the welfare of the greyhound as outlined above in the transportation section.
- (b) Ensure that the steps you took to cool your vehicle and trailer for the journey to the track are also taken prior to leaving the course.
- (c) Give your greyhound water, and electrolytes if required, and make sure you have ample fluids for the greyhound’s trip home.
- (d) The greyhound may be hosed or towelled down prior to being placed in the vehicle or trailer.
- (e) The greyhound may be more affected by the heat after its event so it is important to consistently monitor the condition of your greyhounds.
- (f) Barking muzzles should never be used on greyhounds immediately after a race, as it can prevent the greyhound from panting.
- (g) Once at home ensure the greyhound has sufficient clean water and is again hosed to cool down if required.
- (h) The greyhound could still be affected by the heat so constant monitoring is advisable.
- (i) In accordance with GAR 75 (2) Matter affecting performance, should anything that might have a bearing on the past or future running of a greyhound come to the notice of the trainer or authorised person after the greyhound has left the course, it shall be reported to the Stewards as soon as practicable. GRV expects trainers to report to Stewards via email or telephone any cases of heat stress/heat stroke, exertional rhabdomyolysis (‘acidosis’), polyuria/polydipsia (‘water diabetes’) or other illness that may be attributable to racing in hot weather to monitor the effectiveness of this policy in ensuring the safety and welfare of greyhounds.

Action Table:

Forecasted Temp for the Day of Meeting (BOM Website)

Meeting Status		Forecasted Temp	Action
Ready For Grading	Noms close time	36°C or above	Assess move to Morning/Night
Graded	3pm day prior	32°C - 38°C	Flag meeting as Heat affected
After 3pm day prior	Between 3pm day prior & scratching time on Race Day	38°C or above	Meeting Abandoned or Postponed
Prior to Scratchings	8.30am Race Day	38°C or above	Meeting Abandoned or Postponed
After Scratchings	8.30am to Race Time	32°C - 38°C	Stewards & OTV to monitor