Greyhound Welfare Working Group
25 April 2006 10am – 12noon. 1A Page Street

Attendees:

Henry Hoppe (Chair)	Defra	Clarissa Baldwin	Dog's Trust
Will Fry (Minutes)	Defra	Mike Hobday	LACS
Graham Thurlow	Defra	Heather Holmes	Scottish Exec
Hazel Bentall	NGRC	Raymond Gee	SGV
Tim Mile	RSPCA	David Lipsey	BGRB
Amanda Gibbs	RSPCA	George Russell	Highgate
John Petrie	BGRB	Michael Zivcovic	Askern
Alistair Mclean	NGRC	John Currant	Promoters Association
Chris Laurence	Dog's Trust		

Introduction:

HH explained that the Bill had completed 2nd Reading in the Lords and Defra hope that at least some of the committee proceedings will be completed before the recess.

NGRC Paper:

The view of many in the group was that the NGRC paper (outlining the current regulation of NGRC racing) was not significantly different to the 'wish list' of rules and standards which the group had previously produced.
The 'gaps' were suggested to be more in the involvement of external welfare groups in the process of reviewing and auditing such rules, possibly in the enforcement of the rules, and in the fact that those rules do not apply to the independent tracks.

Greyhound Forum:

DL suggested that a central characteristic of any industry self-regulation must be that it is open and auditable. He suggested that the group explore whether it would be possible to use the Greyhound Forum as an external group to which the NGRC reported on its activities to provide openness and auditability.

A key concern was identified as being the absence of reliable statistical information on, for example, injuries and retirement fates. It was suggested that arrangements with the Greyhound Forum be constituted such that consideration of such figures was possible – though concerns over the confidentiality of individual cases were raised.

CB suggested that it was necessary to ensure that any arrangement did not depend on the individual representatives of industry and welfare groups being personally able to work constructively together as is currently the case.

There was discussion of vet training, the process for reporting injuries, the role of track vets and the inspection of kennels. HH suggested that rather than the GWWG try to reach a conclusion on these it would be more profitable to focus on setting up a process to ensure regular discussions and action on these matters can be taken – such

as through formalising an arrangement whereby the NGRC is required to report to the Greyhound Forum.

MH highlighted that it would be important in such arrangements that there was a suitable body able to say to tracks with, eg, high injury rates that they need to make improvements and that this needed to be backed up with the ability to take action – such as closing a track or revoking/suspending a license.

It was reiterated that were, following further investigation, such self-regulation with Greyhound Forum oversight to be not feasible or to be introduced but found to not adequately safeguard greyhound welfare then it would not preclude Government regulation if there was evidence in the future that intervention was justified.

There was discussion of what any arrangement with the Greyhound Forum would be enforcing. The Greyhound Charter was seen as being the most appropriate basis for this – though it was noted that the independents had not been involved in drawing up that charter and that they should therefore be involved in the current process of revising it.

Actions:

1) The BGRB, NGRC and Clarissa Baldwin will produce a paper to explore the options for formalising a relationship between the NGRC and the Greyhound Forum which would provide openness and auditability to self-regulation.

2) The Greyhound Forum will be revisiting the Greyhound Charter over the next few months. GR will be involved in that process for the independent tracks.

3) JP, working with GR and others, will produce a paper outlining the various options for introducing inspection and enforcement regimes so that industry self-regulation can be considered for the independent tracks.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held at 10am on Wednesday 26 July in Conference room D of Defra's Nobel House.