

## RESPIRATORY DISEASE IN GREYHOUNDS – AN UPDATE

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Following on from the first outbreak of fatal respiratory disease in Kent in February 2008, the NGRC and Animal Health Trust (AHT) have investigated a further eight reports of respiratory disease, involving ten kennels. Some have involved fatalities, bringing the total to ten deaths from 63 greyhounds with kennel cough.

The severity of the disease has varied widely from mild kennel cough within a kennel, to cases where there has been one sudden death but no disease in the rest of the kennel.

As more information has been gathered, it is now possible to see trends and possible links. These links are not evidence for a specific cause, but do serve to highlight certain aspects of greyhound life that may be risk factors for developing respiratory disease and are worth noting as each trainer considers the best way to protect their kennel and kennel strength against contracting the infection.

From the kennels affected to date, eight have had kennel cough within the past month in various areas of the country. The kennel cough in the affected kennels varied from just a few greyhounds to many in the kennel affected. A proportion of these greyhounds have become very ill following racing, and we do have some evidence to suggest that if a greyhound is to become affected it seems to be about 2-3 days after a race or trial, and they are usually apparently healthy until this time.

Moving greyhounds creates a special problem when they go down with kennel cough, as it is often difficult to determine when and where the infection was contracted. In many cases the evidence we have indicates that the coughing begins within a day of being moved to a new kennels. This suggests that the greyhound were already carrying an infection that they were dealing with, and that the stress of movement allowed the disease to worsen. In other cases the dogs have been at the kennels for a few weeks before coughing starts, suggesting that they picked up the cough after being moved.

Although kennel cough is quite contagious and is widespread, the appearance of severe respiratory disease is far less common, which is fortunate considering how difficult it is to treat. The speed at which the disease affects the greyhound is rapid, so there must be no delay in starting treatment – **the only warning may be a reluctance to eat 2-3 days after racing.**

So some basic advice is:

- **Don't transport coughing greyhounds.**
- **Don't exert or race greyhounds that have even a mild cough.**
- **Use a minimum of seven days quarantine for new arrivals.**
- **Monitor new greyhounds after their quarantine as they mix with the rest of the greyhounds.**
- **Monitor all greyhounds for 3-4 days after they have run for ANY sign of illness or fever.**
- **Ask your veterinary surgeon with local knowledge for general advice on minimising spread of infection in each kennels**
- **Cleansing and disinfection followed by routine biosecurity is very effective at reducing the spread of all infections- keep up the routines as recommended.**
- **Seek veterinary advice quickly if in you have any concerns at all.**

There is more detailed information on the NGRC website ([www.ngrc.org.uk](http://www.ngrc.org.uk)) for owners, trainers and vets. The NGRC helpline is **0870 626 5103**, or contact your usual veterinary surgeon.

All reports are investigated to gather as much information as possible. In the meantime, the NGRC is working with the AHT to develop a national survey of kennel cough in order to better understand the initial causes and risks.

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