

Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Overarching questions

1. Why is a Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds necessary?

Finalising the Code addresses one of the recommendations made by Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Charles Milne, following his investigation into aspects of the greyhound racing industry.

It is timely for a more robust Code that sets a standard of welfare for all racing greyhounds in Victoria. This will assist with meeting community expectations regarding animal welfare and help to secure a sustainable future for greyhound racing in Victoria.

For many participants, the new Code will reflect how they already care for their greyhounds. For others, it will help improve management practices and provide clear guidelines for new entrants to the industry.

2. What are the main differences between the new Code and the one it replaces?

The previous Code of Practice for the Operation of Greyhound Establishments sets only basic minimum standards for the operation of greyhound establishments.

The new Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds covers the whole lifecycle of a greyhound from breeding and whelping through to training, racing, retirement and rehoming.

3. How was the final Code developed?

Animal Welfare Victoria (AWV) held workshops with greyhound racing participants, their representative bodies, animal welfare groups and government agencies to work through key issues arising from public submissions and possible solutions.

Consideration of over 1300 public submissions and extensive stakeholder consultation has resulted in a fit-for-purpose Code that prioritises animal welfare while providing flexibility for industry participants.

4. What has changed from the draft Code to the final Code?

In summary, the key revisions have been to:

- Commence the Code on 1 January 2020, allowing time for thorough implementation planning and robust communication to all stakeholders.
- Simplify facility and fencing requirements to remove prescription and better align with greyhound racing participants' methods/practices without compromising animal welfare outcomes. The Code provides that existing participants can bring facilities and fences in their establishment up to Code requirements upon replacement, unless Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) identify a welfare or safety issue.
- Include a consolidated Establishment and Health Management Plan (EHMP) that combines existing requirements and outlines protocols for the overall management of the establishment, including greyhound welfare. The EHMP provides participants with flexibility to specify their own protocols for greyhound management that may differ from the Code (e.g. socialisation, exercise). To ensure that welfare is not compromised, a veterinary practitioner must approve the protocols.
- Remove the distinction between hobby and professional establishments. The Code's minimum welfare standards apply equally to all persons keeping racing greyhounds.

- Recommend rather than mandate training for existing participants, as this recognises existing experience gained through participation in the industry.
- Include a simplified staff ratio that acknowledges the critical socialisation period for puppies (from three to 16 weeks of age).
- Simplify roles and responsibilities of staff within a greyhound establishment, ensuring accountability for greyhound welfare is clear.
- Amend the definition of heritable defects to refer specifically to those outlined in the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* and include a definition for emergency euthanasia.
- Clarify exercise, socialisation and enrichment requirements for all racing greyhounds, with an emphasis on the critical socialisation period, to better prepare greyhounds to transition to life as a pet.
- Require records of greyhounds from birth (rather than 12 weeks) to ensure traceability of greyhounds and their health history.

5. Why does the Code start on 1 January 2020?

This start date allows time for thorough implementation planning and for participants to prepare for, and understand, the Code's requirements. An implementation working group including representatives from GRV, the Office of Racing and Animal Welfare Victoria is being established to develop protocols and procedures that will assist participants to comply with the Code's requirements.

It is anticipated that the implementation working group will develop tailored templates and discuss operational matters to ensure practicality for participants.

6. What do people that keep racing greyhounds need to do by 1 January 2020?

All people keeping racing greyhounds are required to be compliant with the Code and its provisions by 1 January 2020.

This is with the exception of requirements relating to facilities, where existing establishments must bring their facilities up to Code standards upon replacement, or within an earlier timeframe as determined by GRV if a safety or welfare issue is identified.

This means that from 1 January 2020, participants must comply with requirements relating to staffing, establishment operation, records and greyhound husbandry requirements, including nutrition, vaccination and breeding. Participants must also have the necessary documents and reporting processes established, including an EHMP.

7. How does the Code provide participants with flexibility?

The key tool for participants is the EHMP. It provides participants with the ability to nominate tailored protocols that may differ from what is outlined in the Code, for activities such as:

- exercise, socialisation and enrichment
- retirement and rehoming
- muzzling

The EHMP must be approved by a veterinary practitioner and submitted to Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV).

8. Who can enforce this Code?

Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) animal welfare officers will be authorised to enforce the Code, including the EHMP. GRV will be developing a compliance and audit framework which, in many respects, is expected to be similar to the current process for inspection of greyhound establishments.

9. How does the Code improve welfare of racing greyhounds?

Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Charles Milne, recommended the previous Code be comprehensively revised to include animal welfare standards that reflect contemporary community expectations and industry best practice. The new Code takes a whole of life cycle approach to greyhound welfare, so that these dogs can achieve successful racing careers and be well adjusted to transition to life as a pet.

The Code includes mandatory rearing requirements for greyhounds up to 24 weeks of age. These requirements acknowledge the critical socialisation period for puppies. Greyhounds are to be exposed to different environments and behavioural stimuli at the appropriate age (i.e. accounting for timing of vaccinations).

Specific exercise, socialisation and enrichment requirements for greyhounds of all age classes are outlined in the Code, other than greyhounds that are training or racing. Protocols for these greyhounds, or any other protocols that differ from the Code, must be outlined in the EHMP.

The Code also includes a retirement and rehoming program for greyhounds that are retiring from racing and/or breeding. This program aims to provide a smooth transition for greyhounds retiring from racing and moving into life as a pet. Again, any protocols for retirement and rehoming that differ from the Code must be detailed in the EHMP.

10. Does the Code apply to retired greyhounds?

No. A retired greyhound means a greyhound that has been retired from the industry (i.e. it is no longer racing or breeding).

Retired greyhounds are not a matter for the Code and fall under the relevant provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. All retired greyhounds are required to be registered with the relevant local council.

Practical/operational questions

11. Do I need to replace my facilities to comply with the Code by 1 January 2020?

Numerous public submissions raised concerns regarding the cost of replacing existing facilities. To provide participants with an opportunity to plan for the costs associated with facility refurbishments, the final Code provides that existing establishments may bring their facilities into compliance with section 6.7 (Facilities) upon replacement.

Where GRV identify a welfare or safety issue, the Code provides that GRV are able to specify a date by which existing participants must bring facilities and fences in their establishment up to Code requirements.

12. What are the Code's fencing requirements?

In response to feedback received in the submissions, the final Code no longer prescribes the type or mesh size of fencing that must be used, providing participants with the ability to use fencing that is fit-for-purpose for their establishment.

The Code requires that fencing:

- be at least 1.2 metres high
- be maintained to prevent greyhound injury and escape
- not allow for unsafe contact between greyhounds in adjoining pens or yards.

13. Can family members or unpaid persons be 'staff'?

Yes. This was another issue raised in numerous public submissions and it has been clarified in the final Code.

The Code defines staff as “any suitably qualified or experienced person appointed, whether formally or informally (e.g. family member), by the Person in Charge to provide care for greyhounds as required by this Code.”

14. When is overnight staffing required?

Establishments with 50 or less greyhounds require an overnight staff presence only when a greyhound shows signs of whelping, is whelping or is ill.

For establishments with 51 or more greyhounds, there must be at least one staff member on call and at least one suitably qualified or experienced staff member monitoring greyhounds (whether on-site or remotely). Overnight staff must be on-site to care for sick, whelping or injured greyhounds where necessary.

For establishments with 100 greyhounds or more, at least two additional staff members are required to be on call.

15. How does an EHMP benefit me?

The EHMP is a valuable tool for participants, as it provides flexibility to nominate tailored protocols for certain activities such as socialisation, exercise and preparing a greyhound for retirement and rehoming.

The EHMP enabled removal of much of the prescription from the draft Code, recognising the importance of enabling participants to run their establishment in a manner that is fit-for-purpose and unique to your establishment.

16. Is an EHMP mandatory for all greyhound racing establishments?

Yes, every establishment must have an EHMP that covers operational matters and greyhound management.

The EHMP provides flexibility for participants to determine their own protocols for certain activities and must be reviewed annually.

An implementation working group, including GRV, the Office of Racing and Animal Welfare Victoria, will be established to develop tools (such as EHMP templates) that apply to the different types and sizes of greyhound establishments (e.g. small, medium or large, rearing, training etc.).

17. Why do I need an EHMP if I am just a hobby participant?

The Code's minimum welfare standards apply equally to all persons who keep racing greyhounds.

EHMP templates will be developed to support greyhound racing participants to achieve and maintain compliance with the Code.

18. What is the Government and GRV doing to make it easier for participants to complete an EHMP?

An implementation working group, including GRV, the Office of Racing, and Animal Welfare Victoria, will be established to develop tools (such as EHMP templates) that apply to the different types and sizes of greyhound establishments (e.g. small, medium or large, rearing, training etc.).

19. Can EHMPs be approved and signed electronically?

EHMPs can be approved and signed by any means practical, including hard copy or electronic signatures.

Once signed by the Person in Charge, or owner of the establishment (if not the Person in Charge), and an independent veterinary practitioner, EHMPs must be submitted to GRV.

20. Which parts of the Code can be replaced by practices outlined and approved in the EHMP?

The following sections of the Code can be replaced by protocols outlined in an approved EHMP:

- Muzzling protocols, relating to the circumstances that muzzles are used (section 6.2.5).
- Preparing a greyhound for retirement and rehoming (section 6.5).
- Exercise, socialisation and enrichment (section 6.6, Table 1).

Where replacement protocols are not specified in the EHMP, the requirements set out in the Code apply.

21. Why doesn't the Code require mandatory training for all industry participants?

The Code requires that all new participants complete mandatory training, acknowledging the experience of existing participants.

There is also a recommendation that all participants complete appropriate training to maintain their skills and comply with the Code. The intent of the Code is to ensure all persons keeping racing greyhounds have appropriate skills for greyhound husbandry, management and care.

22. What are the heritable defects listed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986?

The defects named in the Schedule to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* are:

- Von Willebrand's Disease
- Progressive Retinal Atrophy
- Neuronal Ceroid Lipofuscinosis
- Collie Eye Anamoly
- Hereditary Cataract

23. Why is the role of a Veterinary Practitioner included?

Animal Welfare Victoria has consulted extensively on the role of a veterinary practitioner in the context of racing greyhounds.

Given greyhounds are athletes, subject to injury and require specialised care at times, veterinary assistance must be available at short notice (i.e. via an agreement).

To provide clarity to participants and veterinary practitioners alike, the Code clearly outlines the details that must be included in any veterinary agreement.

24. What is the critical socialisation period for puppies and why is it important?

The critical socialisation period occurs between three to 16 weeks of age for a puppy. In this period, appropriate socialisation and exposure to different environments can help ensure greyhounds are well-adjusted in adulthood and can relate well to other dogs, animals and people.

The Code's rearing requirements acknowledge this critical socialisation period and support the aim of all greyhounds successfully transitioning to pets following their racing career.

25. Can I have exercise, socialisation and enrichment practices that differ from what is in the Code?

An EHMP may include protocols for exercise, socialisation and enrichment that differ from the Code. Where protocols are not specified, requirements outlined in section 6.6 and Table 1 of the Code apply.

26. What are the retirement and rehoming requirements of the Code?

The Code outlines a seven week pathway for retirement and rehoming of greyhounds that are no longer suitable for racing or breeding. This suggested pathway reflects the importance of a wind down period and adjusted diet, socialisation and exercise.

It is important to note that:

- participants are able to nominate alternate retirement and rehoming pathways in their EHMP, and
- rehoming without a retirement and rehoming program is acceptable providing the appropriate documentation is provided to prospective owners of retired greyhounds.

27. Can I have a retirement or rehoming process that differs from the Code?

Yes, providing that a retirement and rehoming program that differs from the Code is detailed in the approved EHMP.

Owners of greyhounds are responsible for ensuring their greyhound undergoes retirement and rehoming preparations. They may appoint suitable qualified or experienced persons to undertake this activity on their behalf.

Rehoming without a retirement and rehoming program is acceptable providing the appropriate documentation is provided to prospective owners of retired greyhounds. Information regarding retirement or rehoming can be found in Section 6.5 of the Code.

28. How will I be able to comply with the record keeping requirements of the Code?

Participants will be able to keep records, manual or electronic, as they do now. Templates will be developed as part of the working group's activities.

29. It is not possible to tell greyhound puppies apart when they are first born. Why do we need records of each individual greyhound from birth?

Individual greyhound records are required to provide a full health history and ensure traceability when a greyhound moves out of an establishment due to sale, retirement, rehoming or giveaway. Greyhound records are to be maintained for each puppy from birth as they are acquired.

30. Are barking muzzles allowed under the Code?

Yes. Any wire, plastic or mesh muzzle is allowed, as long as it does not restrict normal and necessary behaviour such as panting and drinking.

A correctly fitted muzzle used to cover the nose and jaw area of a greyhound should not restrict normal and necessary behaviour such as panting and drinking.

Muzzling protocols that differ from the Code can be stipulated in the EHMP.