

# Looking After Your Greyhound

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We're always here to help when you need us...



Brighton Greyhound Owners Association Retired  
Greyhound Trust

Charity Number - 275378

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The information and detail set out within this leaflet has been prepared solely as general guidance on the matters which are dealt with and is not intended to replace the need for you to take advice on these matters.

Although within that context every effort has been made by the Retired Greyhound Trust to ensure that the detail set out in this booklet is accurate, the Trust does not accept any liability for the contents of this leaflet or for the consequences of any action taken on the basis of the information provided. Any person taking on the responsibilities of ownership of a greyhound is strongly advised to seek formal advice on their behaviour and behavioural tendencies.

This booklet has been prepared by the Retired Greyhound Trust and some content is taken from behavioural leaflets written by Susan McKeon, MAPDT, UK (01157).

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## Getting Started

Thank you for adopting a greyhound. This booklet will guide you to help your new pet settle into your home.

The Retired Greyhound Trust, often referred to as RGT, is a national charity that was founded in 1975. The RGT has homed over 65,000 greyhounds into loving homes. We have a network of 70 branches across Britain that are run by more than 1,000 dedicated volunteers. These volunteers give a lot of time and energy to help us find the perfect homes for these fantastic dogs.

**As a greyhound owner, there are a few things that you should remember:**

1. Your dog should wear an ID tag at all times. (It is the law when in public.)
2. Never use an extendable lead as they are too dangerous. Greyhounds can go from zero to 40 mph in just a few seconds.
3. When in public your dog should be on a lead and wearing a muzzle.
4. Always clean up after your dog. (Again, it is the law.)
5. You, the owner, should be in control of your greyhound at all times.

### Collars

It is important that the greyhound's collar is positioned correctly. It should go behind the ears, at the thinnest part of the neck, and should be tight enough to get two fingers between the collar and the neck. If it is any looser, the greyhound might slip out of the collar and could be far away before you know what happened.

### Muzzles

When you adopt your greyhound you will receive a muzzle. We recommend that all greyhounds are muzzled while on a walk, especially when you first adopt them. After you fully understand the social behaviour of your dog, you can decide whether to keep the muzzle on, as long as you are in control of the greyhound. If in doubt, it is better to muzzle your dog in public.



## Bringing Your Greyhound Home

When picking up your new dog, bear in mind that your greyhound may not have been in a house before.

Your dog will settle at its own pace, so don't rush it. Common household items such as vacuum cleaners, washing machines and TVs will be new and might initially spook them.

Upon arriving home, take the dog straight into the garden or designated toilet spot. Wait until they relieve themselves and then praise them. Use their name, say **"good boy/girl"** and reward them with a small piece of cheese or biscuit. Repeat this process every hour or so for the first day and then get into a routine of letting them out before meals and straight after meals.

Take your dog around the house on the lead initially so they can calmly see everything.

After 10 minutes take the lead off and sit down, letting them roam around on their own. By now the initial excitement should have worn off and they can snoop around calmly.

Their first few days can be very daunting for them and they may become anxious. Signs of anxiety are pacing, panting, diarrhoea, not eating and drinking and destructiveness. Please be patient while your dog adjusts. Night-lights and low volume radios left on can help the dog not feel completely alone in the dark. To find out more about greyhound anxiety, see page 15.



## House Training Your Greyhound

**Most greyhounds are clean in their kennels, and are happy to stick with a toilet routine in the home once they know it.**

House training should begin as soon as your dog arrives home; take them straight to the garden, wait until they relieve themselves and then reward them with a small piece of cheese or a dog biscuit.

Repeat this step and take your new pet for a short 5 minute walk at regular periods throughout the day. During this time it is unlikely that the greyhound will have had a chance to have an accident, and they will become thoroughly familiar with the idea that any "toilets" are to be done outside.

If your dog has an accident indoors after this initial training period, bear in mind that punishment does not work and can make the dog worse. Anticipate when your dog needs to go, take them outside and praise and reward them when they relieve themselves.

Any accidents in the home should be washed thoroughly with a solution of biological washing liquid; this will take away the smell and will prevent your dog from constantly re-marking the spot.

Take your greyhound to the toilet immediately after feeding, when they get up in the morning and before bedtime, and of course in between.

Some signs to look for when your dog needs to go to the toilet are restlessness, pacing up and down, circling, whining or scratching at the door. At first, there may be no signs that your greyhound needs the toilet as they will have been used to living in a kennel, but greyhounds are generally clean animals and learn very quickly.

Remember, you have a legal responsibility to pick up any mess your dog leaves on public ground. Poop scoops and bags are widely available, and nappy sacks can be a cheaper alternative.

If you are struggling with house training your greyhound please contact your local RGT branch or call 020 8335 3016 for support.



## Feeding Your Greyhound

**It may seem like common sense, but your greyhound's diet is very important to ensure they are happy, healthy and maintain an ideal body weight. Always supervise dogs when they have food or treats.**

### Water

Fresh water should be available at all times and should be changed daily. Please never leave your dog without fresh water.

### Complete Foods

Complete foods are the most effective and efficient way of feeding your greyhound the proteins, vitamins and minerals they need. Look for a complete food with approximately 20% protein, which is the ideal level for a pet dog. There are many complete feeds available on the market, but we recommend Chudley's "Pet Greyhound" which is produced for the Retired Greyhound Trust with the needs of pet greyhounds and other larger dog breeds in mind.

If you choose to soak your dog's food, don't use hot water or the vitamins will be destroyed. Whatever you decide to feed your greyhound, always make sure you follow the feeding instructions on the packaging; ask the kennel you adopt your dog from for details of what your greyhound has been fed and introduce any change gradually.

Keep an eye on your dog's stools. Should they become loose, you may need to change the brand. Generally complete foods come in the form of biscuits or cereal; tinned food is not necessary but can make a meal more appetising.

### Additional items

All greyhounds will enjoy the treat of fresh meat and vegetables, and will be appreciative of any leftovers. However, this is not needed every day and should form part of the main meal. Cooked eggs in any form can be enjoyed once a week or so, and cheese, an excellent training aid, can be crumbled on top. Oily fish such as sardines or pilchards are a healthy treat.

**Please be aware that chocolate, raisins and raw onions are poisonous to dogs and should never be fed to them. Don't allow your dog to scavenge or pick up food from outside the home, or to get into household waste bins.**

It is recommended that you feed your greyhound from a raised bowl on a stand as they have such long legs and necks that it is awkward for them to eat from a bowl placed on the floor. An elevated feeding stand or upturned bucket is ideal.

Don't feed your dog before or during long journeys, or within one hour of exercise.

If you have any problems with or questions about feeding, please contact your local RGT branch or Head Office.

## General Greyhound Care

### Neutering

All greyhounds that leave our kennels will already have been neutered. However, if you adopt a greyhound from another source and they have not been neutered, we strongly recommend that you arrange to have them castrated or spayed as soon as possible.

### Teeth

**The importance of good dental hygiene cannot be overstated.**

Dogs, like people, can get gingivitis (inflammation of the gums caused by bacteria) and can suffer from decay and even lose teeth without proper care. Gingivitis is a primary cause of bad breath in canines.

When the greyhound goes to be neutered, the vet will clean his or her teeth thoroughly. Once this has been done, maintenance is down to you. Regular chews, cooked bones and dental treats will help with some of the plaque build up (always supervise your dogs when they have food or treats.) Brushing their teeth is the most effective form of dental care. Some dogs will let you brush their teeth straight away, but others will need to have their confidence built up.



## General Greyhound Care (cont.)

You can build up your greyhound's confidence in three simple steps:

1. For the first few days, gently stroke your dog's muzzle
2. Once your greyhound accepts this happily, you can progress to lifting their lips and praising them for their co-operation.
3. Once your dog has gained confidence in you, they will allow you to gently brush their teeth. Use a soft bristle toothbrush and a canine toothpaste, usually flavoured with chicken or beef. Dog toothbrushes/finger brushes and canine toothpaste are widely available from pet stores, your local vet or online. Please do not use human toothpaste.

Regular attention to your hound's mouth will save money for you and prevent pain for them in the future. Check your greyhound's teeth and gums regularly and seek veterinary advice if in doubt.

### Ears and Eyes

**Your greyhound's ears and eyes should be checked regularly to avoid infection.** Regular and gentle cleaning of the outer ear with cotton balls and warm salt water or special wipes will keep the ears free of wax that can trap germs and lead to infection. If you notice your greyhound shaking their head or rubbing at their ears and the problem persists, speak to your vet. A greyhound's ears can be sensitive so take care when handling them.

### Parasite Control

**It is important to regularly treat your greyhound for parasites (e.g. fleas and worms).** Speak to your vet or investigate online to find the best treatments and advice; please note that different pests may be more common in certain parts of the country, so it may be worth talking to your vet to see if there are any particular parasites that you should be aware of in your local area.

### Feet and Nails

**Your greyhound's nails will need regular trimming.** You can do this yourself with sharp nail cutters or a nail file, or alternatively your local vet or RGT branch will be happy to help. After your greyhound has been exercising outside, check their pads, feet and legs for cuts or embedded items; wash their feet in warm, soapy water if you find anything and seek veterinary advice if necessary.

Corns are a common problem in greyhounds and can be very painful if left untreated; a corn is a hard lesion (usually about 2-4mm in diameter) which may be lighter than the rest of the pad. If you notice persistent limping or lameness in your greyhound, seek veterinary advice.



### Skin and Coat

**In order to keep your greyhound's coat healthy, groom them regularly with a grooming mitt or firm-bristled brush.**

If you give your greyhound a bath, make sure that they are dried quickly and can lie down somewhere warm. We recommend that you always bath your dog with a dog shampoo.

Many greyhounds have bald patches, especially on their rumps and thighs. This is common and nothing to worry

about unless you notice sore, flaky or red skin, in which case you should speak to your vet. A teaspoon of sunflower, vegetable or fish oil can be added to your greyhound's main meal to help maintain a glossy coat.



## General Greyhound Care (cont.)

### Hot and Cold Temperatures

**Greyhounds are particularly susceptible to extreme temperatures, as they only carry a small portion of fat on their bodies.**

Generally, if you feel the need to wear a coat, your greyhound should be wearing one too. Coats should be big enough to cover from the neck to over the tail. There are lots of different coats available, from walking-out coats for outdoor wear to fleece indoor jackets which are designed to keep your greyhound warm at home on cold nights. The RGT has a wide selection of coats for sale, with all profits going to help the greyhounds in our care; please see page 22 or visit [www.retiredgreyhoundshop.co.uk](http://www.retiredgreyhoundshop.co.uk)

Like all dogs, greyhounds get very hot on warm days. They will pant, possibly be grumpy, and will try to find cool places to lie down. In hot weather, leave your greyhound in peace as much as you can, and remind children to cuddle them a lot less, if at all. Help to keep them cool by placing damp flannels on their body, and make sure to protect them from the sun with sun cream or a shade if they decide to lie outside. If there is a breeze in the garden, it might seem to be the coolest place; however dogs don't know about UV rays and can get badly burnt if the proper precautions are not taken. Always make sure there is a supply of fresh water available to ensure that your greyhound does not get dehydrated.

Please remember to take care to only walk your greyhound before it heats up in the morning or at night when it has cooled down. If they are reluctant to go for a walk, then just give them the opportunity to go to the toilet in the garden and let them lie.

Symptoms that your dog may be overheating include distress, severe panting and collapse. If you think your greyhound is showing signs of this, cool your dog as quickly as possible with cold water and seek veterinary help at once.

**Never leave a dog in a hot room or car – they can die in minutes.**

## Older Greyhounds

Ageing changes occur gradually and may not be obvious to you as you see your greyhound every day. You may see changes in coat colour, sleep pattern, appetite and thirst, body shape and behaviour, as well as greying of the muzzle and a reluctance to exercise. Many of these changes may also develop as symptoms of disease, so please have your greyhound checked regularly by your vet. Routine healthcare such as annual vaccination boosters, worming and flea control should not be overlooked and should be continued throughout your dog's life into old age.

### Diet

There are some notable differences in the nutritional requirements of older dogs. Senior life-stage diets take into account altered lifestyles, reduced levels of activity and declining organ function. Your vet will be able to give you advice when changing to a senior diet.

Some older dogs require up to 20% fewer calories as they become less active, so you should weigh your dog every 3 months. Many veterinary surgeries have scales as well as breed weight guidelines. Adjust your greyhound's food intake to maintain optimum weight; obesity is likely to put more strain on the heart, lungs, muscles and joints, and may result in a shorter life expectancy. If your dog is overweight, speak to your vet about a calorie-controlled diet.

As activity levels fall, older dogs may start to demonstrate muscle wastage. Supplements such as cod liver oil capsules and glucosamine will help prevent joint deterioration. Normal, healthy senior dogs should receive the same levels of protein as younger dogs, but it must be of high quality. Your greyhound's appetite may reduce as the sense of smell and taste diminishes.

Older dogs require extra attention from you. Be kind and considerate and recognise this need for a greater input into your dog's life. Older dogs also tend to need to go to the toilet more often as a result of muscular weakness; give them more opportunities to go out during the day, later at night and earlier in the morning.



## Training Your Greyhound

Everyone likes a well behaved and socialised dog, and providing some basic training will help equip your greyhound to adjust to their life after racing and know what is expected of him in his new home.

Positive training works by rewarding our dogs for the behaviours we want and ignoring or preventing the behaviours we don't want. By rewarding our dogs as soon as they perform the required behaviour (such as 'Down'), we are letting them know they have performed the correct action and giving them a reason to repeat the behaviour next time we ask for it.

Greyhounds are a sensitive breed and do not respond well to punishment. Using aversive training techniques such as shouting, physical punishment, or using rattle cans, will not teach your dog what you want them to do. It is more likely to make your dog fearful and cause other behaviour problems.

When you start teaching your dog, you need to reward them as soon as they have performed the required action. The type of rewards you use need to be something your dog really wants. This will vary from dog to dog, and rewards can include food, praise, gentle petting and games with toys.

For most greyhounds, food rewards work very well. Small pieces of food that are moist, soft and smelly, such as cooked chicken, cheese, meaty strips, frankfurter and sausage are ideal. The rewards need to be easy to handle and about the size of a large pea so they can be delivered and eaten quickly.

Remember, in the initial stages of training you will reward your dog every time he performs the behaviour. Once you are sure your dog knows and understands what you're asking him to do you can start rewarding intermittently, for example 3 times out of 10.

To find out more about training your greyhound, contact your local RGT branch and ask for a copy of the '**Greyhounds: Basic Commands & Training**' leaflet.

## Cats and Greyhounds

Many dogs have a chase instinct and may want to chase cats or other small animals. Due to a greyhound's speed, they are capable of actually catching them. During their upbringing, most greyhounds will have been trained to chase a fast moving, furry lure, which means their instinct to chase a cat may still be present. With careful positive training many greyhounds can live quite happily with cats and other small domestic pets.

When choosing your greyhound, RGT volunteers will have been made aware that you have other pets at home and will have endeavoured to provide you with a greyhound which has been assessed as being 'cat trainable' i.e. shown little/no interest in a cat or small dog when meeting them at the kennel. However, it is not a guarantee that when a fast moving small animal appears in front of a newly homed greyhound, that it will not revert to its instinct to chase.

It is possible to work with your greyhound to put them at ease if you have cats or are moving the greyhound to a location with cats. This process is similar to other methods of training your greyhound, with repetition and rewards.

To find out more contact your local RGT branch and ask for a copy of the '**Greyhounds: Living with Cats & Other Small Animals**' leaflet.





## Babies, Children and Greyhounds

It is essential that special care is taken when introducing any dog into a home where babies and small children are present. **Young children and babies should never be left unattended with a dog,** and must be educated to be calm and gentle around them and to have respect for their needs and their bed. An escape route for your greyhound is an excellent idea, so that when they have had enough, they can retreat to their own space.

Greyhounds are generally people-oriented, gentle, placid and docile, but all breeds have a breaking point when taunted by children. Please teach children respect for your dog, and soon they will be the best of friends.

**Never let a child disturb a greyhound when it is asleep.**

To help your child learn how to behave around your greyhound, please ask your RGT branch for our children's leaflet, **'Your New Pet Greyhound'**.

This leaflet discusses important topics such as:

- **Supervising children and dogs**
- **What to do while the dog is eating or sleeping**
- **How to call a greyhound**
- **Remaining calm if a dog gets over-excited**
- **What to do when you meet other dogs**



## Anxiety in Greyhounds

### Separation Related Issues

Some dogs may suffer from separation related issues when left alone and find it hard to cope. Separation related issues can be distressing for both the dog and the owner; however with careful training and management they can be prevented or treated. There are a number of reasons why some dogs find it hard to cope when by themselves and these include:

- Frustration and/or boredom
- Phobias and fears – such as a fear of thunderstorms or fireworks
- Over-attachment to the owner (or family member), resulting in separation anxiety

In the UK, racing greyhounds are usually kennelled in pairs and have spent their lives surrounded by other greyhounds. Their lives follow a set schedule and daily kennel routine. This means that some greyhounds may find it difficult to cope with changes in their routine and adjusting to periods when their owner is absent; most greyhounds however, do adjust successfully to their new lives and homes after racing.

The signs of separation-related distress can vary, and depend on the individual dog. Some of the more common signs that your dog is experiencing separation issues include:

- Destructive chewing, digging, ripping or shredding of objects when you are absent
- Barking or howling after you have left
- Soiling or urinating in the home when left alone
- Pacing, whining, panting, trembling as you prepare to leave home

### Attention seeking behaviour

Often dogs that suffer with separation related issues become 'velcro' dogs; that is, they never leave your side and follow you from room to room, even to the bathroom. They may pester you for attention by pawing, barking, nudging and leaning on you, or they may always



## Anxiety in Greyhounds (cont.)

want to be in close physical contact such as lying at your feet.

This attention may appear like affection and is nice for us, however it does not help a dog become independent or feel secure and less anxious when left alone. To help prepare your dog for the times when they will be left alone, you need to increase their independence and decrease attention seeking behaviours.

### Increasing the Greyhound's Independence

To help build your dog's independence and ability to cope when left alone, it is essential that you ignore all of your dog's attention seeking behaviour. This does not mean that you should ignore your dog completely and never give him attention; it means that you initiate attention with your dog only when he is calm and quiet.

It can also help if you teach your dog to lay on a mat or bed which is not right next to you, rather than lying at your feet or next to you. If your dog follows you from room to room, a baby gate across doors can prevent this, whilst ensuring that your dog can still see you.



For some dogs, confinement to a crate, also known as an indoor kennel, can help with separation issues but only in cases where the dog has been trained to enjoy time alone in the crate. Many dogs will injure themselves trying to escape from a crate if they have not been trained to accept their crate as a safe place to relax. For details about training your dog to accept a crate, please see our crate training leaflet.

You may also find that using an ADAPTIL® plug-in, collar or spray may help reduce your dog's anxiety. To find out more about ADAPTIL®, speak to your vet or visit [www.adaptil.co.uk](http://www.adaptil.co.uk).

Have a question? We're here to help.

## Calm Departures and Greetings

Keeping your departures and returns home quiet and calm can help prevent separation related issues for your dog. If you make a big fuss of your dog when you leave the house and again when you come home, you are creating a big contrast to your presence in the house and to being absent. This contrast makes it harder for your dog to cope when you are not there and can lead to the dog anticipating your return and becoming over-excited.

In the 10-15 minutes before you leave, it is best to keep your departure low key and to ignore the dog. This means no eye contact, petting or talking to your dog and not saying 'goodbye'. When you come home, it is also essential that your return is kept calm and that you ignore the dog for around 10-15 minutes until he is fully calm. These calm departures and returns will help your dog to cope better with your absence.

### Destructive Behaviour

If your dog has destructive behaviour such as chewing door frames, digging up flooring, or ripping and shredding objects while you are away, it may be that your dog is frustrated or bored by your absence. To help avoid this destructive behaviour it can be useful to provide your dog with something to do in your absence.

If your dog is destructive or barks in your absence, providing a chew toy such as a stuffed Kong® or feeding your dog using an activity feeder can help occupy him. You will need to find out what food your dog likes best and which will keep your dog busy trying to get it out of the stuffed chew toy.

For most dogs, the smellier the food - the better! Foods like meat paste, peanut butter, cheese spread or pieces of liver sausage tend to work well. Once your dog has the hang of how to get the food out of a chew toy, you can always stuff and then freeze it, which will mean that your dog will need to work harder and for longer to get the food out.

If your dog destroys items, you can provide a number of items that your dog can safely destroy such as cardboard boxes (with any staples

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## Anxiety in Greyhounds (cont.)

removed), the cardboard inside of kitchen roll/toilet roll, or old material.

### House Soiling

If your dog soils or urinates in the house while you are absent, it may be that your dog is not fully house-trained or that you left your dog alone for too long with a full bladder. To avoid house soiling, make sure that you take your dog outside, and on a lead, before you leave and encourage them to toilet outside. Once they have toileted, praise them and give them a food treat. If accidents continue to happen, you will need to go back to house-training your dog.

### Fears and Phobias

Sometimes dogs can develop fears and phobias, such as a fear of thunderstorms and loud noises, which may trigger destructive behaviour and anxiety in your dog when you are absent. If your dog has a known fear or phobia, you will need to help your dog overcome this.



It is advisable that you contact a suitably qualified dog trainer or pet behaviour counsellor who will help you with a training plan to overcome your dog's fear.

### Dealing with separation anxiety

In cases of full-blown separation anxiety, it is likely that your dog will become increasingly anxious as you prepare to leave the house. Dogs are very good at picking up the signs that indicate you are about to leave the house. These are called departure cues and can

be as simple as picking up your keys and/or bag, putting on your lipstick, or putting on your coat. These cues are what trigger your dog's anxiety and tell him you are about to leave.

To help your dog cope with your absences, you must desensitise him to your departure cues and then create positive associations with these cues. In time, this will lead your dog to associate the departure cues with something good happening, and make him less likely to be anxious when you leave.

To desensitise your dog to your departure cues, you should go through the motions of leaving the house several times a day, without actually leaving.

### Punishment – why you should not punish your dog

Upon your return home, if you find that your dog has been destructive, soiled or urinated in the house, it is imperative that you do not punish them by shouting or physical means; your dog will not know what he has done wrong. Contrary to popular belief, rubbing your dog's nose in his faeces or urine will not teach him that he has done wrong; it will only serve to make him afraid of you.

Dogs cannot make the association between events that are separated



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Have a question? We're here to help.



## Greyhound Goods

Get everything your greyhound needs in one convenient location and help support the Retired Greyhound Trust.

Our online shop, [www.retiredgreyhoundshop.co.uk](http://www.retiredgreyhoundshop.co.uk), has\*:

- Collars, leads and muzzles
- Greyhound fleeces, rain macs and coats
- Grooming brushes
- Poo bag holders
- Cuddly toys
- Books and care manuals
- Keychains, badges and charms
- Gifts
- Greetings cards and gift wrap
- Christmas cards and calendars
- And much more!

*\*Some items are seasonal and may not be available year round.*

## Homer Magazine

If you have recently adopted your first greyhound from us, you will start receiving Homer magazine, our dedicated publication for greyhound lovers.

This free magazine is printed twice a year and features news from the RGT, rehoming branches, volunteers and supporters.

If you can't wait for the next issue, ask your local RGT branch for a back issue or read the latest issue on our website.



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