

## **ON GREYHOUND POPULATION, ONCE AGAIN**

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It's very difficult to manage a population of dogs properly, generation after generation. Most people have no conception of what is involved. They see a happy, vibrant, beautiful, and well-mannered greyhound, and it never dawns on them that the individual they are enchanted by, is a direct reflection of that population. It's as if some people assume that they simply spring up out of fairy dust. But that isn't the case. There is a grand design to competitive sporting function, and breeding for it. Seldom does anything happen, nor do these amazing dogs emerge, by serendipity.

Briefly, what greyhound racing does, via head-to-head competition, is to identify the most well-adapted individuals of any generation, so that breeders can make informed decisions as to which individuals, bloodlines and bloodline crosses, and which Greyhound families, are on the cutting edge of adaptation to their "job"---which is racing (or coursing, in the case of coursing-bred greyhounds). It also supports a large and genetically diverse general population, which is absolutely crucial to the overall well-being of any breed.

Now, contrary to what you may have read or heard, speed is not the only essential required for a greyhound to have a successful career as a competitor. The successful greyhound must also possess otherworldly gifts of athleticism, nerve, courage, stamina, track and/or field skills, and that great intangible we commonly refer to as "heart"---the all-consuming desire to "lead the pack", and the will to get there, despite adversity.

So when we speak of advocating for the individual greyhound, we can't disconnect that unique and highly functional individual from the population. We can't have a thriving, physically vibrant, supremely adapted and well-tempered individual, without also having a population that embodies and imparts all of those desirable attributes---and vice-versa. Love it or hate it, racing (and coursing) provides and maintains those attributes, and the critical genetic diversity that enriches and sustains any breed. And when we diminish that population, its genetic wellsprings, and its supports, we diminish all greyhounds, exponentially.