

SELFISH GREYHOUNDS

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One of the most interesting things I learned when reading about the early, recorded history of greyhound breeding, was that those early breeders hoped to breed "selfish greyhounds". That was the precise terminology used by John Henry Walsh, aka "Stonehenge", in his mid-19th century breed chronicle, entitled "The Greyhound".

For any of us who are familiar with formal coursing or racing competitions, this is an entirely understandable strategy and goal. Greyhounds do not engage with one another in a cooperative or pack effort to overtake and capture game, without regard for which of them wins the prize. They aren't wolves or jackals, and that "game" is not going to be the main course in their community feed tub this evening.

The greyhounds with whom the overwhelming majority of us are familiar, have been bred to compete in formal, racing competitions for almost a century, and for 15-20 or more generations. Prior to that, they were bred to compete in one-on-one coursing contests, for an even longer period. The bloodlines that have survived those centuries, (and for most) the transition from coursing to racing---the bloodlines which have been handed down to us---are the genetic wellsprings of all modern greyhounds.

Those bloodlines are saturated with the genetics of greyhounds who proved, in their respective eras, to have been among the most single-minded of chasers. Greyhounds who were laser-focused on the "game" and upon leading the pack. Greyhounds who would run through and beyond the pangs of fatigue, repelling all challengers, while imposing their will upon their competitors---"selfish" greyhounds.

We often read of greyhound adopters who are concerned that their greyhound does not seem to show much interest in "running free"---contrary to the popular, imagined ideal of the breed. In the UK they are called dodge pots, they may lead but slow down to wait for the others & then let them overtake. Very rarely will they win. It sometimes comes as quite a revelation to these people, when they are informed that their greyhound is, to a greater or lesser degree, genetically hard-wired for competition, and then, to selfishly desire being first from point A to point B, in pursuit of whatever "prey" is in play.

Even if it is only for bragging rights.