

Let's Talk Greyhounds™

The Newsletter with News, Views and Practical Advice

**Issue #1
Australia**

From the Editor.....

Welcome to our inaugural issue of "Let's Talk Greyhounds™". In over 30 years working with trainers and their greyhounds, as well as writing for the Greyhound Star™ in the UK for the last 27 years, I have found that greyhound enthusiasts, young and old, appreciate information and helpful hints on the training and care of their greyhounds.

"Let's Talk Greyhounds™" will be published at 6-8 week intervals to provide you with reviews on common problems, briefs on feeding, care and management, as well as practical 'Helpful Hints' in each issue.

The issues will be available by e-mail by emailing your name and your email address to info@sprintergold.com and registering your email details.

You will only receive the regular issue of "Let's Talk Greyhounds™" in colour as soon as they are published. You will not be bombarded with other promotional literature and your email details will not be given to a third party.

In this issue, we provide a review of cramping, as well as Helpful Hints'.

We hope that you enjoy reading "Let's Talk Greyhounds™" and I look forward to providing you with a practical source of information to help your greyhounds in future issues.

Good racing

Dr. John Kohnke BVSc RDA



In this Issue:

- **Cramping- Avoiding the Problem**
Plus Helpful Hints and Much More

Helpful Hint 1: How to Estimate Optimum Racing Weight

It is well established that greyhounds run more consistently within a narrow body weight range. Many trainers appraise a greyhound relative to its conditions and the presence of a 'fitness line' from the lower chest over the ribs to the flank. Another method is to trial the greyhound over a uniform distance suited to its speed and fitness level at varying weights of 500g above or below the first weight and evaluate its performance. Once the greyhound wins at a given weight, even after a couple of races, it becomes its ideal racing weight.

Cramping - Avoiding the Problem

There are a number of underlying triggers which can result in muscle cramp during a race. These include feeding high levels of starch feed, such as more than 2 slices of bread/toast per day, or more than 2 cups of a high starch low protein dry food. Greyhounds which are excitable or dehydrated also have a higher risk of cramping, as well as greyhounds racing in late night races under cold conditions without adequate warm-up. Cramping can also be a metabolic problem, due to electrolyte imbalances, lack of calcium in the diet, low potassium intake or excess kidney loss, low vitamin E and/or selenium intake and even a genetic tendency in naturally well muscled bloodlines of greyhounds.

Cramps can last a few seconds to several minutes, mainly affecting the back and long driving muscles of the front and hind limbs.

Recognising Sub-Clinical Cramping

It is not uncommon for a greyhound which is not fit for the speed or distance of a trial or a race to develop a mild muscle cramp and fail to finish strongly or sprint to the line. If a greyhound fails to run strongly towards the finish, it is important that you check the greyhound in the catching area after the race. Feel the muscles along the back line, shoulders and hind limbs for signs of 'knotting', low grade soreness or hardness. In many cases of sub-clinical cramping, simply walking the greyhound off the track and back to the kennels, "knotted" muscles will free up and the cramping may be missed as a reason for the poor performance.

Managing Muscle Cramps

The management to avoid muscle cramping should be tailored to overcoming or correcting the underlying cause.

1. Improving fitness

Cramping is more likely in a greyhound which is 'underdone' or not fit enough for a race. In my experience, fit greyhounds do not cramp, although very cold night race conditions can still trigger a cramping episode. If a greyhound lacks muscle bulk and strength, it has a higher risk of cramping. Walking the animal up a hill for 1km per day, or an 5% incline on a walking machine, may help strengthen the muscles, as well as improve blood supply as the muscles exercise. The use of a 'muscle contractor' or Faradic or TENS machine daily over a 2-3 week period may also help increase muscle fitness by improving the power and strength of contraction. Including short hand slips over 150-200metres, for 7-10 days on alternate days, in place of lead walking is also beneficial.

2. Supplement with Calcium and Vitamins

Providing a daily supplement of calcium, vitamin A and vitamin D3, can help to maintain optimum blood calcium levels to offset low or inadequate dietary levels. Many greyhound dry foods are fortified with calcium, but unless the full recommended amount is fed daily, a less than adequate intake of calcium to ensure optimum muscle function may result. A daily supplement containing calcium as well other nutrients, as contained in **Sprinter GOLD™**, **RESULTS Plus™** may be helpful. Removing calcium binding foods, such as spinach containing oxalates compounds from the diet is also a good idea to reduce repeated episodes of cramping.

3. Provide Muscle Antioxidants

Muscle weakness can result from a low or inadequate intake of vitamin E and/or selenium on a meat based diet. This can also cause a metabolic form of cramping due to muscle enzyme abnormalities. An antioxidant supplement containing vitamin A, vitamin E, organic selenium, magnesium and vitamin C may help maintain an optimum muscle environment to ensure strong contractions and adequate antioxidant levels in rapidly contracting muscles. A supplement, such as **Sprinter GOLD™ ACE™**, containing a comprehensive range of antioxidant nutrients is recommended to correct low or inadequate dietary intake of these important muscle nutrients.

Many trainers find that a 20mL daily supplement of omega oils, such as **Sprinter GOLD ENERGY-E™** with added Vitamin E, also helps to correct low dietary levels of Omega 3 fats to maintain optimum muscle function in greyhounds with a history of cramping.

4. Correct Dehydration and Potassium Loss

Many greyhounds suffer from chronic dehydration and potassium loss due to anxiety, excess urine buffering, excitement and inadequate fluid and potassium intake. Ensure that the greyhound's dry food meal is allowed to soak to a 'mushy' consistency by adding warm water to increase fluid intake. A supplement of 2 x 600mg slow release potassium tablets over the tongue 4 hours prior to kenneling for racing, will help maintain more even blood potassium levels and counteract excessive losses. Offering a 200-250mL (1 cupful) of luke-warm drink of rehydration fluid in water after travelling (not excess so as to avoid exceeding the race weight limit) and prior to kenneling, will also help maintain optimum hydration for racing, especially under hot conditions or in a 'nervy' greyhound.

5. Warm up before a race.

It is good practise to vigorously rub the backline and hind limb driving muscles for a few seconds after taking the greyhound out of the race day kennel and onto the track. It is also helpful to walk the greyhound as briskly as possible to warm it up prior to parading to the boxes on a cold evening, or prior to a late night race.

It the greyhound continues to cramp, a thorough investigation of the diet, a muscle check and blood sample to determine electrolyte or other abnormalities, even anaemia, should be carried out by your veterinarian. Consult your vet for advice.

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