

Amanda's Diary

This month we interview RGT co-ordinator Amanda Ainsworth on some of the issues that she and the headquarters staff have been tackling in recent weeks.



'A dog is for life, not just'

"Thankfully, we don't get dragged into the Christmas 'Andrex puppy scenario' says Amanda.

"In fact, although we don't have a policy about 'not homing at Christmas' - it does tend to be a time when we would be much more hesitant about re-homing an ex-racer.

"You might be okay, in fact very pleased to have a middle aged couple with no kids or grandkids rushing about, offering a dog a home over Christmas. "But for obvious reasons, it is

often a stressful time and the last thing that a new dogs needs as he or she tries to adjust to a new environment."

But - aren't there some greyhounds who are just happier in



DUVET DOGS

Pack of 8 beautiful Greeting Cards (blank inside) 2 each of 4 designs by Hilary Cargill-Phillips 139mm x 104mm £4 per pack (inc p&p)

Fund raising experts produce a 'Top 10 things' list for the RGT

A group of fund raising experts have come up with an information sheet about the RGT. Entitled 'The 10 Most Frequently Asked Questions 'Dispelling the Myths'. The 11 questions makes interesting reading.

Q1 Is the RGT a Charity?

The Retired Greyhound Trust (RGT) is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission (registered number 269668). The RGT submits annual accounts to the Charity Commission and these can be seen on the Commission's website (www.charity-commission.gov.uk). A copy of the annual accounts is available on request from the RGT (phone 0844 8268424).

Q2 What is the RGT's Mission Statement?

The Retired Greyhound Trust strives for the day when no ex-Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) racing greyhound is without a good home.

Q3 How many dogs do you rehome?

In 2009, we found homes for 4,730 retired greyhounds.

Q4 Who runs the RGT?

The RGT is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board is chaired by Dr Andrew Higgins MRCVS, and there are currently eight other Trustees: Frances Allen MRCVS, Roger Cearns (Sittingbourne Track Owner), Arthur Hammond (Honorary President of the Federation of British Greyhound Owners' Association, FBGOA), John Haynes (GBGB Director and Chairman of FBGOA), John Simpson (greyhound trainer), Maurice Watkins (Chairman of GBGB), Andrew Rosindell (MP for Romford), Joe Akerman (Accountant).

There are five staff members based in our office in Worcester Park, Surrey. In 2009 the payroll was less than 6% of the total RGT expenditure. We are always trying to keep down our overheads.

Q5 How many Volunteers does the RGT have?

We have over 1000 volunteers nationwide. A volunteer is a supporter who gives their time (or services) for free to the charity. A volunteer is not remunerated but out of pocket expenses (e.g. petrol, fares, telephone etc.) are reimbursed if the volunteer wishes to claim them.

Q6 Where does the RGT Funding come from?

Our funding comes through the generosity of the general public and from

the greyhound industry via the British Greyhound Racing Fund (BGRF).

Over the last 5 years the public's contribution has significantly increased and we have encouraged this through advertising, attending shows (we attended over 500 shows in 2010), sponsorship and other fundraising endeavours. The RGT received legacies to the total value of £1.6 m over the last three years (2008-10).

In 2009 the RGT received a grant of £1,755,000 from the BGRF which represented 43% of our total income for that year (£4,085,229). In 2010 the BGRF grant was reduced to £1,550,000 and further cuts cannot be ruled out. We therefore need to do even more to raise our profile with the public and attract more gifts and donations.

Q7 How much does the RGT spend on advertising?

The RGT currently spends around £200,000 on advertising each year. There are three objectives:

- To raise awareness of the greyhound as a pet
- To direct potential new owners to the local branch through local paper classified advertising
- To raise funds through gifts and legacies.

In addition the RGT makes use of the web and most of our branches have web sites that can be readily accessed from our main site (<http://www.retiredgreyhounds.co.uk/>).

Q8 What is the RGT's Vision for the Future?

Our main objectives are to:

- Ensure the charity is run according to best practice
- Do all we can to continue to rehome as many retired greyhounds as possible
- Work with the greyhound industry to find solutions
- Improve our communication with stakeholders and supporters
- Raise awareness of the organisation's work, the needs and issues
- Develop a concise and positive message that both educates and motivates support
- Increase fundraising (we are currently reviewing the recommendations in the recent Compton Report

with a view to implementing a suitable fundraising strategy for RGT)

- Improve administration and procedural efficiency
- Ensure we provide the best value for money
- Produce an Annual Review and publish it on our website.

Q9 Why don't you enforce Rule 18?

Enforcement of Rule 18 (covering the responsibilities of the last registered owner) is a matter for GBGB. Although supported by the industry, RGT is an independent charity and our sole mission is to home retired ex-racing greyhounds regardless of the circumstances.

Q10 Some people have suggested a number of alternatives to fundraising such as introducing a levy on kennelling bills when dogs are racing, paying a 'retirement tax' to the RGT when owners buy their dogs, or owners paying a per race entry fee that would go to the RGT. Why don't you consider these?

These are all valid suggestions but are questions for the greyhound industry as a whole. We believe strongly that it is the owner's responsibility to make provision for the racing dog in retirement.

Q11 What is RGT Events Ltd?

RGT Events (Company Number 3825899) is the trading arm of the RGT and is a wholly owned subsidiary. It is a requirement of the Charity Commission that trading is a separate entity. There are two directors, Arthur Hammond and John Haynes, both trustees of RGT. The trading company currently has three main objectives:

- To provide basic equipment to a new owner (collars, leads, coats etc.)
- To promote the RGT by selling a limited range of merchandise including Christmas cards, calendars and soft toys for the younger greyhound enthusiast
- To provide items of merchandise to the branches for re-sale at greyhound tracks and shows attended by the branches.

If you have any further questions please do let us know and we will do our best to answer them.

kennels?

Amanda says: "I don't think any greyhound is unhappy in kennels. It is what they know, and where they feel comfortable, but the majority learn to love home life too - if you are prepared to give them time.

"In my experience as a home finder and someone who fostered dogs for many years, most greyhounds will adapt. The key is patience.

"A good example is a dog who my mother homed, a former Catford grader who only died recently.

"For probably three years, he would choose to lie down in a room away from people. He wasn't stressed or unhappy, he just enjoyed being on his own.

"Then one day, for no apparent reason, he just lay down in the lounge with people all around him, quite content.

"In the vast majority of cases it doesn't take that long. Some dogs embrace home life from virtually the moment they walk through the door. Others need time and understanding.

"Quite often the owner sees the dog keeping out of everyone's way and is anxious that the dog is unhappy.

"He probably isn't. He is just adapting to a very different lifestyle.

"In my experience, leave them alone, don't make a fuss and their natural curiosity will normally kick in and they will want to know what is going on."

But what about those that don't - the 'unhomeables'?

Amanda says: "There a few who prefer kennels and others



with little quirks that rule them out for homing.

"But just because a dog can't be homed, that doesn't mean that we put them to sleep. Euthanasia is always a final resort.

"The only exception to that is the case of the nasty dogs. I don't know how many of them there are, it isn't a figure that I have ever kept record of, but we are probably talking about 20-30 a year out of 4,500.

"These are the dogs with a 'screw loose'. You tend to find that many of those who would shred another dog, are the same ones who would have a go at you if you approached them in the wrong circumstances.

"In those few cases, I will make the decision to ask the vet to put the dog to sleep.

"You do so reluctantly, but in the knowledge that if you don't, you are risking someone else's dog, one of the volunteers or

members of the public.

"You can try to isolate the vicious dogs, but accidents happen, and I don't want to be the one explaining to the owner of a poodle that their dog is dead because nobody was prepared to take responsibility for a vicious greyhound."

20 ex-racers were added to the homing list following the decision of Sittingbourne trainer Alec Beale to hand in his licence.

Amanda said: "They were all retired dogs being kept by Alec who is leaving his kennel at Keston. There are another eleven racing dogs who he so far been unable to sell so far, but that we haven't been able to take."

RGT headquarters at Worcester Park are looking for a full time member of staff following the recent departure of Kim Coton.

Anyone interested should phone 0844 8268424

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There's a hopeful, trusting look in the eyes of most retired greyhounds. They're hoping for a comfortable retirement home, and they trust us to provide it for them!

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But a legacy could be the answer; for example,

a tax effective way of donating is to remember us in your will.

For more information on how to leave a legacy to The Retired Greyhound Trust, simply fill in the coupon or phone us on:

0844 826 8424

You'll be doing us all a big favour.

I'd like more information on leaving a legacy to RGT

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retired greyhound trust



Retired Greyhound Trust

2nd Floor, Park House,
1-4 Park Terrace, Worcester Park
Surrey KT4 7JZ

www.retiredgreyhounds.co.uk
email: greyhounds@retiredgreyhounds.co.uk

QC/Jan2011