

Wirral Racing Greyhound Trainer sentenced to lifetime ban and suspended 4 month custodial sentence after pleading guilty to charges of neglect and cruelty to twenty-nine dogs

Wirral Council brings prosecution against trainer to rescue abused racing greyhounds in first believed use of the Animal Welfare act by a local Council in England

Press Release

Monday 22 February 2010 13.00 hrs

A greyhound racing trainer and owner was this morning sentenced to a lifetime ban and a 4 month suspended custodial sentence after pleading guilty to eleven separate charges brought under sections 9 and 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in a landmark case for racing greyhound welfare.

Prosecution was brought against **Mr Ian Street** by **Wirral Council** with the support of **Greyhound Rescue West of England (GRWE)**, following the removal of **29 greyhounds** from premises at Hillcroft Poultry Farm, Frankby Road, Wirral on 4 April 2009. A GRWE spokesperson said 'We believe this is the first time the Animal Welfare Act has been used by a Council in England to rescue racing greyhounds from unsuitable conditions'.

Birkenhead Magistrates heard how the Council had been monitoring the situation at Mr Street's premises over a number of months and had offered advice on welfare improvements required, which had not been acted upon. Given just three days notice, volunteers from GRWE undertook a mammoth rescue operation to remove all 29 dogs to safety.

The Charity was supported by Wirral Council's Enforcement Officer and local police in rescuing the dogs from where they were being kept in **damaged, rusty and blood-stained wire kennels, a garden shed and a loose-run compound**. The kennelled dogs were kept in near-total darkness with **an open, clogged drainage channel containing stinking brown sludge**. **The walls of several of the kennels were stained with blood**. Many of the dogs were kept muzzled, and none had dry bedding; all of these dogs were **stained with urine** with five completely saturated.

Witnesses described how the dogs were found in extremely poor physical condition and seemed unused to human contact. A number of the greyhounds had **severely damaged and bleeding tails, several with old breaks**. Almost all the dogs showed evidence of **heavy flea, mite and worm infestations**. The dogs had very poor skin and coats that were **caked in mud, urine and faeces**. Many of the dogs had scabs and infected sores, including pressure sores. Three of the greyhounds had **noticeable injuries to their feet, including missing or injured toes**.

There were regular outbreaks of fighting in the loose-run compound containing ten young dogs thought to be between six- and eight-months old. In particular three dogs were seen repeatedly pinning a black and white bitch to the floor, that bitch was found with a **large, severe, open and**

infected wound to her thigh. These young dogs lacked food, water, bedding or shelter; all were extremely unused to human contact. **Several wet themselves as they were removed from the enclosure and all suffered sickness and diarrhoea en route to the inspection kennels.**

The vet who examined the dogs confirmed these were all illnesses that would have been spotted by a responsible dog owner, who would have sought appropriate advice and treatment. Mr Street sought no veterinary advice and the illnesses and injuries were left untreated.

In response to the sentencing, a spokesperson for GRWE said, We are absolutely delighted with the sentence handed down to Mr Street today, and feel it shows due recognition of the neglect these dogs have endured. We hope it will encourage other councils to use their powers under the animal welfare act to remove racing greyhounds from unsuitable conditions in the future.'

'We are delighted that the Court has seen fit to ensure that no other dogs will be subjected to thoughtless cruelty at the hands of Mr Street.'

GRWE also noted that 'every greyhound racing owner and trainer has a basic duty of care under the Animal Welfare Act to provide food, water and shelter to the greyhounds in their care, and to protect them from disease and injury. GRWE hopes that this will encourage other Councils to use their powers under the Animal Welfare Act to rescue greyhounds suffering neglect and being kept in unsuitable conditions in the future.'

After a programme of recuperation including appropriate veterinary care, clean water, good food, bedding and plenty of kindness, GRWE has found loving family homes for all twenty-nine of the greyhounds removed from Hillcroft Poultry Farm.

– ends –

notes to editors

- GRWE is a registered charity and the largest independent greyhound rescue organisation in the UK working specifically to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome abandoned or abused greyhounds and lurchers. GRWE receives no funding from the racing industry and is totally dependent on the generosity of the public and the hard work of our volunteers. See www.grwe.com .
- GRWE is not a campaigning organisation and does not as a charity hold a view on greyhound racing; our mission is to rescue, care for and rehome unwanted, abused and abandoned greyhounds, and to lobby for improved racing greyhound welfare legislation.
- GRWE is a member of the UK Greyhound Forum. The Greyhound Forum (formed in 1994) is chaired by the Dogs Trust and is made up of both industry members and welfare representatives who meet twice a year to discuss welfare issues.
- Mr Street pleaded guilty to eleven separate charges brought under section 9 and section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. For further information on the Act, see www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/pdf/ukpga_20060045_en.pdf .
- **For further information, or to arrange interviews, please contact Belinda McCarthy, GRWE National PR Officer (belinda@swmconsulting.co.uk / 07590 227243) or Vicky Johnson, GRWE Regional PR Officer (vicky.johnson@grwe.com / 07989 502096)**



Images taken by GRWE during rescue operation
(available at high resolution from
<http://gallery.me.com/vickyjohnson#100087>)

Image 1: A severe, open and infected wound measuring
6cm x 3.5cm found on the thigh of a young bitch



Image 2: A damaged tail, badly scabbed and broken



Image 3: Thick penile discharge, with evident dirt
and scabs clinging to red irritated skin



Image 4: The walls of several of the kennels were heavily
stained with blood



Image 5: Subdued bitch confined to dangerously unsafe wire
kennel in almost total darkness (image taken with flash)