

# A guide to companion greyhound care



Thank you for fostering or adopting a greyhound from Brightside Farm Sanctuary. We have rescued and re-homed hundreds of greyhounds. Brightside founder, Emma Haswell, has a huge and long standing love of these beautiful dogs.

This handbook is designed to be used by new owners and foster carers to assist with transitioning their greyhound from kennelled race dog to companion animal. The aim is to guide you through the stages of transition and provide you with tools and steps of evaluation as well as giving you a good understanding of your new friend.

It is important to remember your greyhound has not learned recall yet. In fact most greyhounds arrive at Brightside never having their own name. It is all new as with a puppy.

Racing greyhounds are used to regimented lifestyles, with few options or choices to make on a daily basis. Learning how they are supposed to behave in a domestic setting can be quite an adjustment, so the more interaction and enrichment you can introduce to them, the more quickly they will adapt to their new and wonderful life.



New found freedom and exciting surroundings can sometimes lead to a return to a temporary ‘puppy-hood’ so be sure to establish some ground rules and shut doors or use baby gates to block access to areas you don’t wish your greyhound to access.



Greyhounds are generally quiet, sensitive, well-mannered and affectionate dogs and usually settle in well to their new surroundings quickly. However, each dog is an individual and for some, becoming a house pet can be a major transition, while others will adjust to the comforts and pleasures of home instantly.

No matter where your dog fits in this rehabilitation process, please remember that your affection, understanding, patience and consistency will make all the difference. Consistency and timing are very important when training your greyhound.

## **Recall and walking your greyhound in public.**



Greyhounds who come to us from the racing industry have no recall as they usually don't even have their own name. This is very important to remember.

They need to be taught recall in the way that a new puppy would need to learn recall and their name.

Unfortunately the law in Tasmania (Dog Control Act) currently states that all greyhounds must be muzzled in public and walked on a lead no longer than 2 metres in length.

## **Toilet training**

Most greyhounds do not come into shelters toilet trained after living in a kennel environment. They are more accustomed to waiting to be turned out (from their cages) to relieve themselves. They are very clean dogs and easily toilet trained.

When first brought into the home, the greyhound should be treated like a puppy being housetrained. Take the dog outside every couple of hours for the

first few days especially after meals, play and long naps.

Do not scold the dog if it has an accident and you are not there to catch it in time. When catching the dog in the act, say a firm NO and immediately take the dog outside. Corrections can only be made at the time it is occurring not afterwards.



## **The home environment: new structures and noises**

### ***Stairs***

Many greyhounds have never had to walk up or down stairs and some may find them awkward or frightening at first – particularly the open-backed type (with no risers).

Your greyhound will need a gradual introduction to them, beginning with a few steps initially and/or coaxing with food rewards.

Physical help (ie. manually moving one leg at a time) may be necessary and/or a hand on the collar and a knee behind them to ensure they do not injure themselves (by jumping, backing up or going too quickly). Even the most frightened or tentative dogs learn stairs after a few days.

### ***Slippery floors***

Like stairs, greyhounds may not have ever walked on slippery surfaces such as tiles or polished floorboards. If a dog is extremely hesitant, place towels or mats at intervals across the floor until its confidence improves.



## ***Noise in the home***

Loud noises and the sounds of household appliances such as televisions, vacuum cleaners, and hair dryers are all a new experience for a greyhound. Exposure to such noises over a short period, when carried out in a non-threatening manner, is usually all that is necessary to ensure your dog becomes comfortable with them. Most greyhounds adapt incredibly fast, more so than other dogs.

## ***Glass doors and windows***

Most greyhounds will not recognise glass doors or windows as solid barriers at first and will need to be shown this fact. Lead them gently around each room, tapping on the windows or glass panels. Removable tape may be necessary at the greyhound's eye level to prevent accident or injury.

## ***Travelling in cars***



Greyhounds are usually experienced travellers who love to go out in the car. Many will lie down as soon as the vehicle starts moving. Be aware that your greyhound has probably only travelled before in vans or dog trailers. They will need to be taught how to jump safely in and out of the car, all dogs should be tethered while travelling in the car.

## ***Roads***

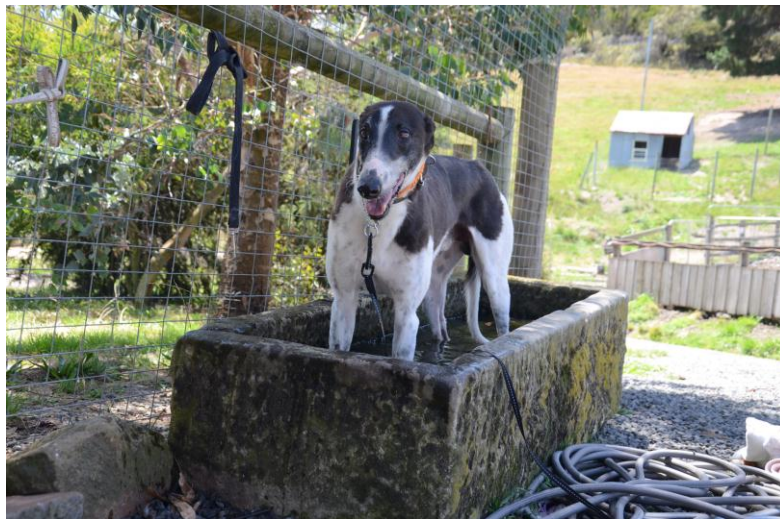
Greyhounds have no road sense and start off with, and have never been taught, recall. They usually do not have a name when they arrive at Brightside it is something they must learn from scratch.

Your greyhound can see a distance of up to one kilometre ahead and their instinct is to chase. If they sight something to chase their speed goes from 0 to 60 kilometres and amongst cars and traffic disaster can occur in a flash.

**You should NEVER let your greyhound off leash in an unfenced or traffic dense area!**

### ***Swimming pools***

Greyhounds are not great swimmers but they LOVE water! They love to relax in a wading pool or at the beach in the sea.



### **Introducing your greyhound to other pets**

Greyhounds are accustomed to mixing with other greyhounds and usually enjoy other canines when introduced correctly. Some greyhounds will get

along well with cats and other small animals, but others are too **reactive** to live with them successfully.

We have assessed all our greyhounds' suitability with other animals and will try to match you with the right greyhound for your situation.

For the first few weeks, keep the dogs and/or cats separated when you are not at home or cannot supervise their interaction. Watch them carefully when they are interacting. NEVER allow your greyhound to chase cats or other animals or get overly excited around them - it sets your greyhound up to fail. Every time they chase they get a rush that we have worked hard to get them to happily live without!!



Any introductions should be carried out with your greyhound on a lead and properly muzzled (using the collar and muzzle we supplied) until its reactions can be accurately assessed.

Risks should never be taken with the safety of other pets until you are totally confident that it does not pose a threat.

Again don't ever let your greyhound chase any of your small animals, even in play. Play can turn to hunt quickly and no cat or small dog is fast enough to get out of the way of a determined greyhound.



### ***Introductions to other dogs***

It is best to introduce your greyhound to your other dog(s) at Brightside to make sure they all get on okay. With your animals at home the greyhound should be introduced on lead and wearing his or her muzzle, have them meet outside under control and take them for a walk together. Walk them around your property on lead and then bring them into the house. Our greyhounds are all dog friendly.



### ***Introductions to cats***



Introduce your greyhound to your cat indoors with the greyhound muzzled and leashed. Hold the leash in your hand. Leave the cat on the floor. Greyhounds do not have any fear of cats. Greyhounds have been trained to chase smaller fast moving animals so for the safety of your cat you should leave the muzzle on your greyhound if they are in the backyard together until you know they are safe together. Many Brightside greyhounds live happily with cats and other animals once they learn how to behave.



## Children and greyhounds

Greyhounds are tolerant and friendly by nature and are generally very good with children. However, an important question is:

***"Do your children know how to behave with animals?"***

Many greyhounds have never been around children and some can be wary or frightened; children tend to move quickly, are a little uncoordinated and can be noisy.



Close supervision of young children around any breed of dog is essential. Most greyhounds will move away if harassed by a pestering child, but it is best not to assume this, especially early on.

Encourage your children to always be gentle and kind to your greyhound and if they are too young to understand this we recommend supervision at all times. Below are some useful tips to help create safe boundaries for both your greyhound and the children living in the house.

### ***Let sleeping dogs lie***

Children should not jump on or near a sleeping greyhound. They should not pat a sleeping greyhound in case they growl or snap at being woken. Teach children to call a greyhound's name first before you wake it.



### ***Quiet time***

Greyhounds benefit from quiet time and privacy and children should be taught that there are boundaries. For example, children should be taught that feeding time is privacy time for your greyhound and if your dog retreats to its bed, children should be educated that this is his quiet time.

### ***Hands off the food***

Never allow your children to take away or interfere with your dog's food or dog dish. However, if you observe any dominant behaviour towards a child from your dog around her food (such as barking or posturing) correct this immediately.

This can be done by an adult having the dog under control from a distance and allowing the greyhound to see the child come and place the food bowl in front of it. This establishes the child as higher in the pack.

### ***Hugging and climbing***

Children should never hang off your dog's neck, hug your dog or be allowed to climb on or over your dog. This is a very unsafe way for children to interact with any dog, let alone a greyhound.

## ***Open doors and gates***

Greyhounds can 'dart' quickly and can dash down the street in a blink of the eye. Teach your children (and everyone in the family) to shut the car door and the front door, ensure the garage door is down and to close any gates.

## **Home alone enrichment**

Companion animals living in domestic situations benefit from enrichment programs. Establishing a daily enrichment program helps to prevent anxiety, separation stress, boredom, frustration and loneliness. In general it is good for mental and physical stimulation.

For those times when we can't be with the dog you need to make sure he has an interesting environment to amuse him in your absence. Normal healthy dogs sleep for a good part of the day so it is important that they have appropriate places to rest where they are not exposed to excessive heat, cold or weather conditions. They need food and plenty of fresh water.



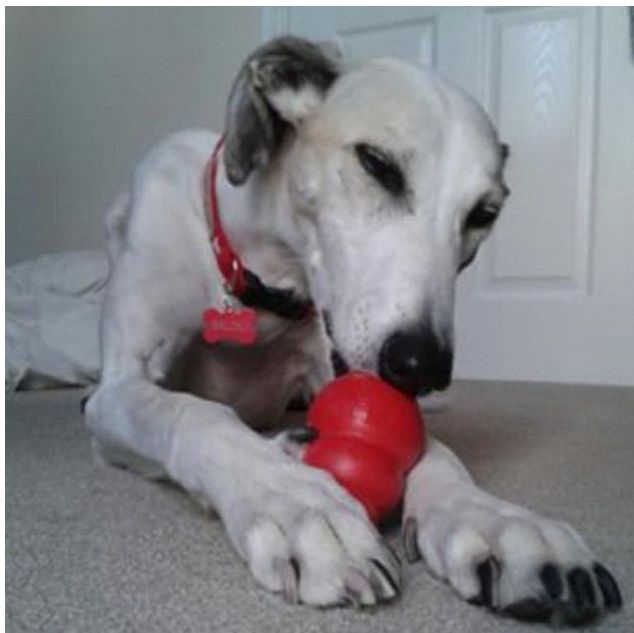
For those times when they are not sleeping, eating or drinking you need to supply some ways to occupy their time and attention. Before using any of the suggestions in this handout or any other enrichment source, check to make sure it is appropriate for the type, size and age of your dog.

First you must be sure that the toys and activities that you give your dog will not harm him in any way. Below are some ideas for safe enrichment.



### ***Room with a view***

If your dog doesn't get over excited by outside stimulation, you can provide peep holes in the fence for him to view the outside world, or build a platform so he can see outside his yard.



### ***Kong toys***

Kongs are wonderful toys that are readily available at the shelter or pet stores. The Kong is stuffed with food and left for the dog to work on during the day. Make sure you have the right size for your dog.

Bones are great for enjoyment and oral care.

REMEMBER that food toys can be a problem in households that have more than one dog. Make sure you supervise the first time you use food toys.

### **Enrichment games**

#### ***The Treasure Hunt***

You can do this with your greyhound or use it as a home alone enrichment tool. Instead of giving his dry food in a bowl, go out in the yard and scatter the food over the grass. Encourage the greyhound to look, search and find. Give a positive response when a piece is found. That should keep him busy for a while. If he is used to having a Kong try hiding that for him to find.

## ***Treats you can re-cycle***

Get your butcher to cut the ends off the large marrow bones. When the dog has finished getting all the marrow out you can recycle it! Wash the bone then smear peanut butter, cream cheese or mince in the open end, fill the hollow centre with dry food and seal the other end with the peanut butter etc. This will keep him occupied for quite some time.

Regular daily walks of 20-30 minutes are sufficient for your greyhound, although some will happily take more outings and walks if you offer this. Some greyhounds have had enough exercise after 15 minutes, while others will go for 40 minutes.

Always build up to longer walks. Greyhounds are not really the best choice as jogging companions – ***they are low-energy dogs who display short bursts of energy only*** and are not built for endurance.

Greyhounds are sight hounds and most will chase anything, including a plastic bag! Your new pet can go from standing to 40km/hr very quickly. It is therefore important that your greyhound be kept on a lead at all times

## **Feeding troubleshooting**

### ***Changes in diet***

Your greyhound may go off its food for a few days after the adoption. This is usually a result of stress and should pass fairly quickly as the dog settles in to your home. Your dog also may suffer slight diarrhoea as a result of stress, change of diet and change of routine. This is all very normal, we recommend using a good quality dry food to reduce the chance of an upset stomach.

### ***Dining alone and defending the dish***

Greyhounds are used to dining alone in their kennels and not having to share food or space while eating. This changes at Brightside and dogs eat in groups but some greyhounds still prefer to have a bowl in a private place with no sharing.

If your greyhound is coming into a home that has an existing dog you must remember to feed each dog in a separate location. This ensures both dogs get their full meal and that the greyhound does not try to 'Defend its Dish' and food.

## ***Diet recommendations and routine***

It is recommended that greyhounds be fed two meals a day. The preferred quantity for the main meal consists of around 3-5 cups of dry food or kibble, with 200-400 grams of fresh meat.

**Never allow your greyhound or other dogs to eat chocolate, onions, grapes or raisins as these can cause serious illness or death.**

## **Preventing Twisted Bowel /Bloat Syndrome**

Technically, Bloat/Twisted Bowel Syndrome is called Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus, or GDV (also referred to as gastric torsion). Bloat is inflammation and twisting of the stomach which significantly reduces the dog's air intake.

If bloat occurs, your greyhound will lie down and gasp for air, or pace continuously. If your greyhound gets bloat, you will need to get to a vet as soon as possible. Below are some suggestions on how to avoid this condition.

### ***No exercise directly before or after eating***

To prevent bloat, do not walk your greyhound after a meal or allow any strenuous exercise directly after it has eaten and do not allow your dog to gulp excessive amounts of water when eating. Waiting one hour before and after eating is a good guide.

### ***Elevated Eating***

Racing greyhounds are not fed from elevated dishes. However, once a greyhound goes into an adoptive home, many things in the environment change. Often, adopters are told to feed their new charges from elevated dishes. Advertisements for elevated food dishes refer to gastric problems as the reason you should use raised dishes for large or giant breed dogs.

In determining whether or not to elevate a greyhound's dish, it is important to consider musculoskeletal problems, which are common for retired racers who often have old injuries. Eating from raised dishes can reduce strain on the neck and back and lessen discomfort on arthritic joints, as well.



## Lounge lizards

Greyhounds are the ultimate 'lounge lizards' or 'couch potatoes' and will generally make themselves at home on your bed or lounge fairly quickly.



If you do not want your greyhound on the furniture then make this a rule from Day 1. Provide the dog with a comfortable, soft bed of their own and position the bed so that the dog can take in most of the household activities without being in the way. For outside, a steel-framed bed with a soft blanket is ideal. Your greyhound will soon learn the command 'on your bed'.

## Counter surfing

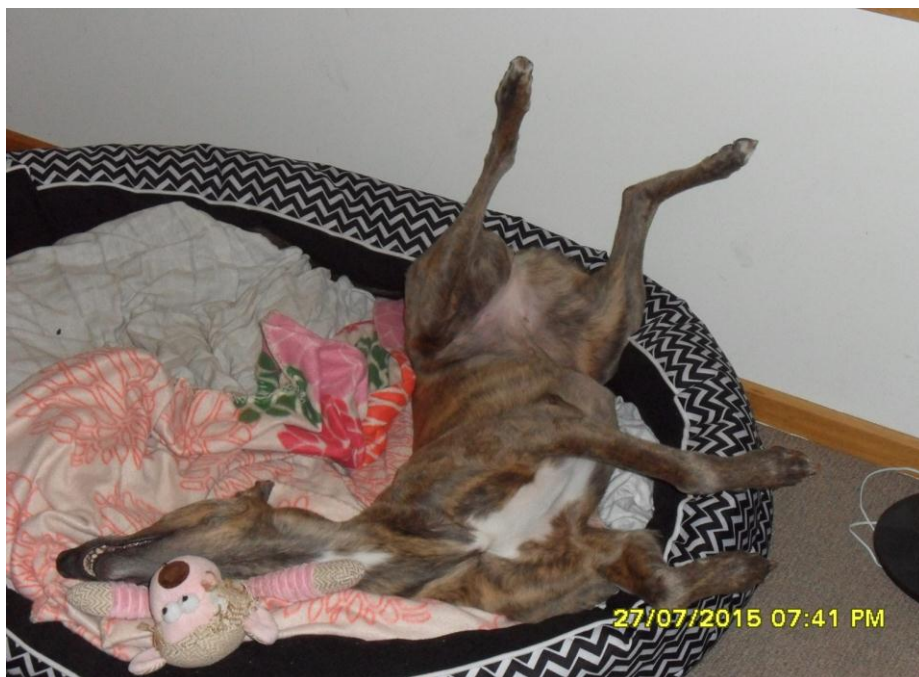
'Counter surfing', also known as 'self-service' – where they steal food from bench tops or tables - can be another vice of some newly introduced greyhounds. They can often reach these quite easily and not knowing any differently, believe that any food they come across is theirs for the taking. A stern "NO" when catching a dog in the act is usually all that is needed, otherwise a quick spray with a squirt bottle filled with water will deter such behaviour.

Most greyhounds are quite sensitive and these gentle disciplinary measures are usually effective.

## Possessiveness and sleep-space guarding

Any dog may be possessive about food and its bed. The dog should learn to accept its food and food bowl being handled and also the bedding.

There have been reports of 'sleep-space aggression' in some greyhounds. They tend to sleep deeply and due to being accustomed to sleeping undisturbed in individual kennels, they are unused to being startled in their sleep.



It is best to ensure the dog is awake and aware before anyone touches it.

If your dog is disturbed whilst sleeping and you notice it wakes with a 'fight' reaction (it snaps or makes a startled growl) then work with the dog to make it accustomed to being touched or woken when asleep. For example, call its name, gently touch its leg or foot until it understands that there is no need for fear.

## Endearing quirks

Most greyhounds have never learned to play. Their lives have been all about the business of being trained athletes. Giving them time to learn how to play is a vital part of their adaptation to life as a family pet.

If you find your new greyhound doing any of the following don't be too concerned – it's rather endearing and you should be flattered.

***Roaching*** – lying on their back with legs in the air (like a dying cockroach).

***Nesting*** – rearranging their bedding to make a more comfortable pile.



***Smiling*** – with all teeth bared.

***Teeth Chattering*** – with over excitement!



Brightside Farm Sanctuary

[www.brightside.org.au](http://www.brightside.org.au)

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