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## WHY RACING DOESN'T MAKE GREYHOUNDS HAPPY, BUT FRUSTRATED

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The racing industry claims that racing makes greyhounds happy, because the dogs are just doing what nature intended them for. So by that line of thinking, those who race them are doing them a favour. Equally, some people who race their dogs in amateur races also say the same thing. The difference being that, according to them, the absence of betting makes amateur racing not just acceptable but fun for the dogs.

None of this is actually true.

The trainers themselves tell us that: *"Puppies do not learn to run around a greyhound track all by themselves. While it is natural for them to chase live quarry across a field, chasing a dummy hare often needs plenty of tuition."* (from *Training and Racing the Greyhound* by Darren Morris)

The verb used here by the trainer, *'to chase'*, is not synonymous with *'to prey on'*.

*'To prey on'* during hunting is a completely different thing, a much more elaborate and complex art made up of specific stages with a beginning, a process and a conclusion. So chasing after a dummy hare is not the same thing as chasing after a live animal and certainly not hunting it.

So running is different from chasing and it's different from hunting. These three modes of behaviour can sometimes overlap but they are not the same thing.

Greyhounds are predators, and their predatory sequence is as follows:

To locate – to chase – to bite to catch – to bite to kill – to dissect – to consume.

Running is just one of these stages, and when preying on quarry the aim is to catch the prey and kill it. In other words, the predatory instinct of greyhounds only gratifies and satisfies them on condition that at the very least they catch the prey.

The point here is that when one's motivation to do something is continuously stimulated but never satisfied, one becomes frustrated.

Imagine that you really love doing something, like going for a nice swim in the sea, for instance. Now imagine that someone takes you to the beach and leads you up to the shore...the sea is right there, it's so inviting, you are about to dive in, but then...you are taken away. If you had to do this over and over, time after time...there is no doubt that you would be frustrated.

Greyhounds on tracks run and run, but they never catch the hare. Worse still, once the race is over the dummy suddenly disappears and they are stopped, put on a leash and moved off as if they were parcels. Fooled and duped, basically. Frustrated twice over.

But track racing is unnatural for at least two more reasons: the first and most fundamental one, is because as hunters greyhounds do not compete but collaborate with each other. Hunting is a collaboration between members of the same social group, and it requires strategies and synergy.

Racing and training for racing means turning greyhounds into something that they are not, suppressing their natural sociability in order to develop an unnatural competitiveness. So basically their true nature is distorted. Anyone who has had the chance to observe greyhounds' extraordinary ability to socialise among themselves, despite the interference of man, knows exactly what we are talking about.

The second reason is the actual way of running: those who have had the pleasure of watching a greyhound running free will have noticed the difference between this way of running and running on a race track. On the one hand, running in a free zig-zag formation with an expression of sheer joy, on the other, running in a rectilinear motion with a tense and rigid expression.

Therefore, to claim that running on a racetrack makes a greyhound happy, and to claim that it gives him the chance to express his true nature, is a huge mystification.

It is possible to give greyhounds the chance to express their motivational drive, thus making them feel satisfied and fulfilled, as long as it is done as a game.

We will be exploring this topic further.

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Translated by Isobel Deeley