

Greyhound

Adoption Guide



You may need to assist your new Greyhound's transition from race dog or kenneled racing prospect to family pet by introducing it to normal household life, and providing affection, understanding and patience during this period. Sometimes this adjustment period is easy, but at other times it can be more difficult. Please be mindful that your new companion has likely spent most of its life in a cage. Your dog will have already spent some time in a foster home situation as part of Friends of the Hound's rescue and homing process, but the learning and exposure necessary for pet life will need to continue. Each dog is an individual, and as most 'racing dogs' have never ventured into a house before entering the program, or had exposure to 'normal life experiences', becoming a house pet can be an ongoing transition for some of them. Others walk right in and take over – adjusting to the comforts, pleasures and routines very readily!

Greyhounds are generally quiet, well-mannered and affectionate and are usually quite adaptable and settle well into their new surroundings. You can give your dog the best opportunity to adapt and settle into the home by slowly exposing the dog to "new" things in a relaxed, safe environment and guiding it gently to understand 'acceptable' behaviour.

Initially it is best to give the dog adequate time and space – let it become accustomed to the new environment and people around it, and adjust in it's own time. Often the excitement of having a new family member can mean over-stimulation and incredible pressure for the dog – setting it up to fail instantly. Keep expectations and administrations to a reasonable level to begin.

Easing the Transition

Greyhounds thrive on human companionship and their sedentary and calm nature make them perfect indoor pets. To give the greatest start integrating into a new home or to continue the work of the foster home you can provide your dog with exposure to a number of household elements....

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 positioned behind them to ensure they do not injure themselves (by jumping, backing up or going too quickly). Even the most frightened or tentative dogs can often learn to manoeuvre up/down stairs if given gentle guidance and encouragement.

SLIPPERY FLOORS: Like stairs, Greyhounds may not have ever walked on slippery surfaces such as tiles, polished floorboards or lino. If a dog is extremely hesitant, you can place towels or mats at intervals across the floor and increase the distance until its confidence improves. Slowly build confidence.

GLASS WINDOWS OR DOORS: Some dogs may not recognise glass doors or windows or pool fences as solid barriers at first, and may need to be shown by being led gently around each room and tapping on the windows or glass panels. Removable tape may need to be placed temporarily at the dog's eye level to prevent accident or injury.

HOUSEHOLD NOISES: Loud noises and the sound of household appliances and tools, such as televisions, vacuum cleaners, etc may be frightening to a dog that has not experienced them before. Gentle exposure to such noises over a short period, when carried out in a non-threatening manner, is usually all that is necessary to ensure the dog becomes comfortable with them.

CAR TRAVEL: Most Greyhounds are experienced travellers and usually love to go out in the car. Most will lie down as soon as the vehicle starts moving. However, most have probably travelled in a station wagon, van or dog trailer, and may need to get used to sprung seats. Many Greyhounds need to be taught how to jump safely into and out of a car (as their racing trainer would have prevented this to avoid injuries, particularly to toes). Most dogs will learn to hop in the car themselves, but some may always expect help. It is important that they only get in or out of the car when asked.

TOILET TRAINING: When first brought into the home, the Greyhound should be treated in a similar manner to a new puppy. Most Greyhounds will have learnt toilet training in their foster home, and they are generally very clean and are often used to a routine for relieving themselves which makes the toilet training quite easy, but it is important to establish a toileting routine.

Take the dog outside every couple of hours for the first couple of days, particularly after meals, naps and periods of play. Praise the dog when it urinates or defecates outside. A mutually acceptable routine will be established after a few days, but it is important to watch the greyhound carefully when it is inside so that you may prevent or correct it immediately if it tries to go to the toilet inside. Pacing and sniffing around are often signs of needing 'to go'. When your Greyhound goes to the toilet outside, give it praise. Do not chastise the dog when an accident occurs inside and you are not there to try and stop it – corrections must only be made at the time, otherwise it will only cause confusion and fear in the dog.

CHILDREN: Greyhounds are tolerant and friendly by nature, and are generally good with children.

An important question is: "Does your child/children know how to behave with animals?"

Some Greyhounds have never had experience with children and can be wary or frightened. Young children tend to move quickly, often not very co-ordinated, and usually loudly, with high-pitched squeals. This may cause excitement or anxiety in some Greyhounds.

Close supervision of young children with any breed of dog is essential. Most Greyhounds will move away if harassed by a pestering child.

The following are some simple rules to ensure a happy relationship:-

'Let sleeping dogs lie' - Do not jump on or near a sleeping greyhound, or even pat or disturb it whilst it is asleep. When a sleeping dog is startled it may growl or snap before it is fully awake enough to realise that the culprit is its best friend.

Greyhounds who have spent their lives individually caged can often have a 'sleep startle response'. If you must wake your sleeping Greyhound, teach the family to call it by name first and refrain from startling the dog.

Privacy and quiet - All dogs are entitled to privacy and quiet when they eat and sleep. Children must be instructed to not bother the dog during its "quiet" times or when it retreats to its bed or 'time out' zone. This has to be consistently enforced.

Food - Do not let your child take away the dog's food or interfere with its mealtime in any way. However, allowing the child to place the dog's food dish in front of it whilst you have it under control is often said to be a good way to establish the child's higher place in the 'pack'. Any tendency for a dog to exhibit dominance posturing towards a child, ie. barking or growling, etc, should be corrected instantly. When starting to settle into a home a dog may try to ascertain it's 'place in the pack' and test the situation by challenging the weakest or smallest in the family ie. a young child. Immediate action to discourage this behavior should maintain harmony in the household and let the dog understand its place and what is 'acceptable' behaviour.

Hanging On – It is not recommended for children to hang on the dog's neck or climb on its back. Greyhounds can be injured or feel threatened.

Remember.... a child old enough to have a dog is old enough to treat it with kindness and respect.

Open Doors and Gates - Be extremely cautious about leaving doors and gates open (this goes for car doors also). Greyhounds move so quickly they will be out the door and down the street in the blink of an eye. Teach your children and their friends about the importance of keeping doors and gates closed at all times. It is also important to be careful of tail injuries when bringing your dog through doors and gates.

OTHER PETS: Greyhounds are accustomed to being around other Greyhounds (in kennel situations) and usually enjoy the company of another canine. They are quite sociable and will normally mix readily with other dogs when introduced correctly. Some Greyhounds will get along well with cats and other small animals, but others are just too 'keen' or exhibit a high prey drive. Any introductions should be carried out with the Greyhound on a lead and properly muzzled until the dog's reactions can be accurately assessed. Risks should never be taken with the safety of other pets until you are totally confident that the Greyhound does not pose a threat. Your Greyhound should be walked on-leash at all times, please be aware that there are risks involved in going to off-leash dog parks. Leashed walks provide exercise, social stimulation and enjoyment, and minimise risk to your dog.

Introducing your new Greyhound to your other pets

Dogs – It is best to introduce your greyhound to your other dog(s) on neutral territory initially. With all dogs on lead, have them meet outside under control and take them for a walk together. When arriving back home walk them around your property on lead and then bring them into the house.

Cats – A controlled introduction is necessary - introduce your greyhound to your cat indoors with the greyhound muzzled and leashed. Keep hold of the leash. Leave the cat on the floor. Do not rush the introduction and let the animals meet, sniff, and relax.

Other Animals – birds, chickens, guinea pigs etc – must be housed in a secure environment, safe from your new Greyhound, and it is important to dissuade the hound from focusing on or harassing the animals in their space.

Separation - For the first several 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.

No Chasing - Never 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.

Feeding - Feed your cats/dogs in separate areas and be careful not to leave food out to create a dispute. Do not become complacent around animals and food.

GREYHOUNDS AND THE ELEMENTS: Greyhounds have little or no body fat, and short, smooth coats, and as a consequence tend to feel the elements more than other dogs. They should sleep indoors at night and have adequate shelter during the day if left alone. A Greyhound that gets overheated or too cold can lose condition very quickly and their health can deteriorate rapidly. A warm coat is required for those cold winter days and nights.

POSSESSIVENESS: A Greyhound may be possessive about its food and/or bed. The dog should learn to accept its food and food bowl being handled. The Greyhound should also accept bedding and toys being handled or shared. Caution should be undertaken when dealing with new dogs with highly prized food items or toys.

There has been reports of sleep-space startle in some Greyhounds. They tend to sleep deeply and, due to being accustomed to sleeping undisturbed in individual kennels, they are generally not used to being startled in their sleep. It is best to ensure the dog is awake and aware before touching or surprising it. If your dog awakes with the 'fight' reaction (an aggressive response) when disturbed whilst sleeping – ie. a startled growl or snap – then work with the dog to make it accustomed to being touched or disturbed when asleep by gently touching a leg or foot until it understands or accepts that there is no need for a fear response. Be mindful of children around a dog that exhibits a sleep-space startle response.

EXERCISE/SOCIALISATION/OUTINGS: Regular daily walks of 20-30 minutes are sufficient for your Greyhound, although some will happily take more outings and walking if you offer it. Some greys have had enough after 15 minutes while others will go for 40+ minutes. Always build up to longer walks. Greyhounds are not really the best choice for jogging companions, as they are a low-energy dog – built for short bursts of speed, not endurance.

You should never put a greyhound on an overhead run or tie them out to a stake or a tree as they can take off running at high speeds and suffer a broken neck, other injury or death. Retractable or long dog leads are not recommended for the same reason.

Take short walks in the early morning or late evening. Be alert to any signs of heat stress in your dog. Many greyhounds enjoy cooling off by walking or lying in a shallow pool of water. A child's wading pool can be ideal.

MUZZLING: NSW Legislation requires all Greyhounds to be muzzled in public, but has exemptions through a program called 'Greenhound'. Check out the Greenhound website for more information. In QLD the muzzling requirement for Greyhounds depends on local council by-laws. Many councils do not require pet Greyhounds to be muzzled. Demuzzling exemptions are also available, whereby the dog must be assessed and approved for a 'green collar' to go muzzle free in public. Check with your local council.

GREYHOUNDS ARE SIGHTHOUNDS and most will chase a plastic bag! Your new pet can go from standing to 60km very quickly. It is therefore recommended that they be kept on a lead at all times when out of the yard or not in an enclosed or secure area. Typical hounds - they do not always come when they are called and will have no road sense.

FEEDING: It is recommended that Greyhounds be fed two meals a day, with a balanced raw diet, as research shows it to cause less disease than processed food just as fresh is better than processed for humans.

Diets can include either raw or cooked meat, good quality grain-free kibble, pasta, rice, vegetables, and fruit. Free range or organic raw chicken wings are a great toothbrush, and supply calcium and minerals. Sardines are an important supplement. Fresh blended green leaves, and raw fruit and vegetables also supply many nutrients. Small amounts of coconut oil (or flaxseed oil, etc) can be added to meals.

Never allow your dog/s to eat chocolate, onions, grapes or raisins as these can cause serious illness or death. Please see our feeding guide and information sheet on toxic plants and foods for more information.

BLOAT: Bloat or gastric torsion but it is a life-threatening emergency and all deep-chested dogs are susceptible. Bloat is the inflammation and twisting of the stomach, significantly reducing the dog's air intake. If this occurs your Greyhound will lie down and gasp for air, or pace continuously. If your dog has symptoms of bloat seek immediate veterinary attention.

To prevent bloat do not walk your Greyhound after a meal or allow any strenuous exercise directly after it has eaten. Feed your Greyhound two meals per day, and do not allow your dog to gulp excessive amounts of water.

BATHING YOUR GREYHOUND: Greyhounds do not tend to get that 'doggy smell' that many other dogs suffer. Your greyhound may only need bathing several times a year. Excessive bathing will add to their problem of dry and flaky skin. Use just warm or cool water only when bathing your greyhound. If the water is too warm your greyhound might get faint or woozy as their blood vessels are so close to the surface of their skin. Use only natural or gentle soaps or shampoos (eg. Oatmeal). Grooming mitts are an excellent for brushing these smooth-coated hounds. They usually shed only lightly.

BEHAVIOUR & BASIC OBEDIENCE TRAINING: Consistency and firmness will create a happy, well-mannered dog (as set rules and commands reduce confusion for the dog and promote desirable behaviour). It is important that some basic ground rules are established for the dog early. Start how you intend to carry on - and do not set up the dog to fail.

Greyhounds are used to walking on a lead and generally do not pull. It is important to ensure that your dog responds on a lead and walks calmly beside you when required. Generally, a Greyhound should never be allowed to run off lead unless in a fully fenced yard or enclosure. Their amazing speed and a lack of understanding about roads and traffic make a dangerous combination, particularly in busy suburbs.

Greyhounds are used to a fairly regimented life, with the majority of them being creatures of habit, and are most relaxed when a set routine is in place. Establishment of set meal times and regular exercise and toileting opportunities will help a new Greyhound to feel at ease. A Greyhound suddenly given the freedom of an entire house and a choice in what it does may feel anxious, or revert to a second puppyhood (temporarily).

Greyhounds are the ultimate 'loungers' or 'couch potatoes' and opportunists, so will generally make themselves at home on your bed or lounge fairly quickly. If you do not want your Greyhound on the furniture, provide the dog with a comfortable, soft bed of their own (or several) 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 or cover (out of the elements) is ideal. Your Greyhound will soon learn the command "on your bed".

"Counter surfing" is another vice of some newly introduced Greyhounds – where they steal food from benchtops or tables. They can reach 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. Most Greyhounds are quite sensitive and gentle disciplinary measures are usually sufficient. Be sure to place breakables or potentially harmful or poisonous items out of the reach of your Greyhound.

Employ positive reinforcement with gentle training methods, in short sessions only – end positively, before the dog gets bored or distracted, and the intelligent Greyhound will learn quickly.

Most Greyhounds have never learned to "play" – their lives have been all business - being trained athletes in a confined environment. Giving them time to learn how to play is a vital part of adapting to life as a family pet. Whilst all dogs love to play with squeaky toys, they emulate the sound of a distressed or wounded animal which can heighten the predatory behaviour, particularly in a Greyhound which has been 'stirred up' with squeakers or squawkers in the racing industry.

Local obedience classes can provide controlled socialisation opportunities and behaviour guidance. Basic obedience, 'good manners' and consistency are important for a happy dog and happy home.

And remember.... **PRAISE THE DOG WHEN IT DOES THE RIGHT THING**

ONGOING MAINTENANCE & CARE

New owners will be required to provide adequate ongoing treatment and care of the greyhound – ie. continuing monthly heartworm prevention (or provision of yearly heartworm prevention injection if preferred), along with regular intestinal worming, regular flea/tick treatment, dental and nail care and follow-up vaccinations and health checks, etc.

As with any breed of dog, it is important to look after your Greyhounds teeth, nails and ears and to check them on a regular basis. Brushing with specifically designed dog toothbrushes can help stop the build-up of tartar, and the regular feeding of bones and other hard food can help with this. It is also recommended that you consult your local veterinarian with regard to scaling and cleaning your Greyhounds teeth when necessary to prevent gum disease and poor health.

Nails should be trimmed regularly (every 3-4 weeks minimum), particularly if not getting much natural wear on rough or hard surfaces. If the nails are allowed to overgrow, it will become very uncomfortable for your Greyhound and could lead to further pain issues. If you are uneasy about trimming your dog's nails, then talk with your local grooming salon, mobile dog wash operator or vet who will be more than happy to help you. Be aware that corns can be a problem for some Greyhounds – corns grow on the pads of the paw and can cause pain and lameness.

Ears should be checked regularly (every few months) for any build-up of dirt. There are a number of products available for this purpose – or you can gently clean the ear using a cotton ball and a little amount of baby oil or similar.

Some ex-racers may suffer arthritis as they get older, often the result of strain or injuries experienced during their racing career. Supplements to help manage arthritis can be added to their diet.

With your COMPASSION, PATIENCE and UNDERSTANDING, you will help your Greyhound become a wonderful pet.

It has been said that “Greyhounds are the dog-world’s best kept secret” and as a new pet Greyhound owner you will soon learn that this is true!

Lastly, 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 (looking like a dying cockroach);
- * Tongue lolling – usually with head hanging over the edge of a lounge or bed;
- * Nesting – rearranging their bedding to make a more comfortable pile, with their (or your) favourite objects taking pride of place;
- * Smiling – with all teeth grinningly bared;
- * Teeth chattering – with over excitement or pure joy!
- * Nudging – ‘here I am – pat me, pat me, pat me....’;
- * Souveniring – moving pillows, stuffed animals, socks, shoes, toys, household items, etc around – usually to their bed or ‘nest’.

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