

# Celebrating Greyhounds

Winter 2015 Online Magazine

## **Around Town Hounds**

*ALSO INSIDE:*

A New Flu Vaccine

Raising Money Doing Nothing

Lessons From a Lost Greyhound



# Celebrating Greyhounds



**Winter 2015**  
Table of Contents

## Departments

- 3 From the Editor
- 5 Letters to the Editor
- 7 Greyhound Bytes
- 12 **Book Review: *Retired from Racing, not from Life*** By Stacy Pigott
- 14 **Ask the Expert: Resource Guarding — Unwanted Protection**  
By Deb Levasseur, CBT
- 48 You're Invited
- 50 Marketplace

*Cover Photo: Cold weather doesn't stop Around Town Hounds members, who bundled up for this January 2012 walk at the Hollywood Cemetery.*

## Features

- 19 **Taking A Shot at Canine Influenza**  
Merck Animal Health has pioneered a vaccine against the newly identified H3N2 strain of Canine Influenza.  
By Merck Animal Health
- 22 **Getting Something for Nothing**  
The Greyt Non-Event has been a successful fundraiser for the Greyhound Adoption League of Texas.  
By Shannon Forrest
- 28 **Around Town Hounds**  
What started as a walking group has turned out to be so much more.  
By Stacy Pigott
- 35 **The Search for Bella**  
One Greyhound owner answers the question, "What now?" when the search for another's lost hound is called off.  
By Karen Fry McCormick

- 38 **Bone Cancer in Greyhounds**  
A personal account of one owner's experiences with three Greyhounds and three cases of osteosarcoma.  
By Sian Greenock



*Wyatt (Water Table), Moola (Some Sweet Moola), and Wesley (Pyrite), adopted by Sue Jenkin through Connecticut Greyhound Adoption, in Avon, Connecticut.*

# From the Editor

If there's one thing fostering Greyhounds has taught me, it's that I don't know nearly as much about dogs as I thought I did. It seems each foster teaches me something new, or reminds me of something old I needed to remember.

Dimmit, my first foster, taught me about counter surfing and separation anxiety. When I took my dogs for a short walk to test his ability to be alone, Dimmit loudly voiced his disapproval as the door closed. I waited a few minutes to see if he would quiet down, which he did. Taking his silence as acceptance, my girls and I took a short, five-minute walk. I returned to find a large area rug, holes chewed in several spots, inside Dimmit's crate. Dimmit found a wonderful home with another Greyhound.

I learn something from each and every foster, even if it's what not to do the next time. Sometimes, the lesson imparted is one I'd rather not

have to relearn. My current foster, Eliot, fits that category.

Eliot came in as an owner surrender from a hoarding-type situation. He was covered in fleas and had a serious skin infection that made him extremely itchy. He didn't have any hair on the back half of his body, leaving his pink skin exposed and sensitive.

Luckily, the skin condition was easily treated, and Eliot's hair started to grow back as the infection waned. What didn't go away, however, was his nagging cough. On his next visit to the veterinarian, I learned why. Eliot has fluid around his heart and lungs that causes the dry, hacking cough that plagues him at night. The fluid is the result of several serious and incurable heart conditions.

Of course, we are treating Eliot as best we can — managing his symptoms with medications and keeping him comfortable. But the sad truth is Eliot

## Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine

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isn't expected to live for more than a few months. He's gone from a foster looking for a forever home to a hospice foster who is already in his final home.

Yes, I'll keep him until the end. He's getting spoiled rotten and treated like a king. And he's reminding me of the one lesson no one ever wants to learn — how to say goodbye. I don't think I'll ever get better at it, and that's OK. No one does.

All I can do is make Eliot's life the best it can be for the time he has left, which, in reality, is what we should all be striving for with every Greyhound in our care. So I'll hug my girls a little tighter tonight and give them a few more treats for no reason at all. Because in the end, all that matters is that you love them and you let them know it. ■

*Stacy*



*Eliot has found his final home with Editor-In-Chief Stacy Pigott.*

## DISCLAIMER

*Celebrating Greyhounds* Magazine is published quarterly by The Greyhound Project, Inc., a nonprofit Massachusetts corporation.

The magazine's purpose is to provide information about Greyhounds as a breed. Recognizing that there are differing points of view on issues such as racing, breeding, and adoption policies, to mention a few, the magazine does not advocate a position on these issues. It will publish articles and reader letters regarding these issues if deemed appropriate. Unless otherwise stated, The Greyhound Project, Inc. does not necessarily agree with materials published herein. Ideas and opinions are those of the writers. No authentication or approval is implied by the editors or publishers, who assume no liability for information contained herein. *Celebrating Greyhounds* Magazine reserves the right to refuse publication, to edit or modify any material, and to hold such material for an indeterminate period. If your Greyhound is ill, please see a veterinarian.

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# Your Letters

## Dear Editor,

As always, I truly enjoy your outstanding electronic publication. The graphics were exceptionally sharp and the articles were both highly informative and entertaining. I look forward to reading each edition "cover to cover."

As two of my Greyhounds are registered therapy dogs, I found the article addressing therapy dogs (Fall 2015 *Celebrating Greyhounds*) quite relevant.

I just renewed my existing subscription. I think the subscription is on an annual basis, but I did not wish for my subscription to expire. The renewal process is now more expedient than in the past as well.

Keep up your terrific editorial skills in producing such a fine esoteric publication.

**Nick Como**

## Dear Stacy,

Thank you so much for the obituary on Katy, aka Jams Kathern, in your wonderful magazine. I feel complete now, and although I hate the overuse of the word "closure," it fits. My wife and I are very grateful.

Regarding your editor's note about bounce backs: I've heard every excuse in the world for returning a Greyhound and frankly, did not feel many of them were necessary or valid. But as you say, it is better for the Greyhound. I began to resent the people that brought their Greyhounds back. It seemed to me that they did not live up to their commitment. Personally, I would live in a refrigerator box if I had to, to keep my Greys.

I guess the best thing that can be done to minimize returns is to vet the potential

adopters, even past the norm, by asking hypothetical questions, such as how would a baby affect your commitment? And what about moving, marriage, death in the family, shyness, neighbors, etc. Essentially, conceptualize a reason beforehand for a return and nip it in the bud during the interview. Emphasize the meaning of the word commitment. The only thing harder than adopting out a Greyhound is adopting out the same Greyhound **twice**.

Thanks again for a fitting tribute for Katy.

**David P. French**

## Hi Stacy,

As my wife and I are both 74, I worry about reaching the age that I may not be able to take proper care of our Greyhounds. Not exactly the situation you



are describing (in the Fall issue regarding bounce backs). I somewhere read about our situation, but don't recall where.

We have had six Greyhounds over time, plus one we only had for about three months. Stella was described as a dog that had back problems and was being treated with steroids. I thought I could handle it, but the dog did not really interact with us in hardly any way. She was showing signs of improvement in her movement, and she would actually chase a squirrel. We were told to gradually reduce the pills we were giving her, but she would pee and poop even while eating, and taking her outside before feeding did not help. Luckily, the stools were fairly firm and when picked up did not leave any visible traces behind. This was driving us crazy, and after three months I called the group and said I couldn't handle it any

longer. They were understanding and they took her back. I felt that we failed miserably.

All of our other Greyhounds were great. We still have two. My wife has developed Alzheimer's and I have had to move her to a memory care unit. I could not assure her safety, and she really couldn't navigate the steps. I worried about her falling down the stairs and I was also worried that she might let the dogs out the front door sometime.

I take the dogs to visit frequently, and they are a big hit at the nursing home, at least with most of the residents. There are always some notable exceptions.

A funny story, I was at the nursing home signing in and a couple of women came over, one with a walker, asking the usual questions — how old are they, what are their names, etc. When I turned around there were five women

around the dogs, and they were bent over petting them. Suddenly one of them said "Someone farted!" and they very quickly dispersed! I did not realize they could move that fast... That sometimes happens when we're in my van, and I must admit it can be powerfully strong!

*John Kues*  
*Loveland, Ohio*



# Greyhound Bytes:

*News you can sink your teeth into*

## **Greyhound Owner Makes *Forbes* Website**

CATONSVILLE, Maryland — Cynthia Wilber, a retiree from Maryland, gives us a peek at the last 10 things she bought for herself and her three retired Greyhounds.

“I retired three years ago after 34 years as a finance manager in the computer industry. I’m turning 65 this month and live with three Greyhounds (also retired). I do volunteer work for garden conservancies, feral cat trap-neuter-return, retired Greyhounds, and in winter do tax prep for the elderly and disadvantaged.

“Since retiring, I give myself an annual budget by expense category and track actual spending against it. This helps with my spending decisions throughout the year

and my planning for the next year, and I haven’t had to deprive myself, or the dogs, of anything.”

Read Cynthia Wilber’s entry in [“The Last 10 Things I Bought” on Forbes.com](#).



## **Comedy Featuring Greyhound Racing has Private Screening**

MOBILE, Alabama — “Mobile has already proved it has a lot of heart, and this crowd

takes things to the next level!” said film director Tyler Russell at a private screening of *Here Comes Rusty* in Mobile, Alabama. More than 200 guests watched the film on the big screen for the first time.

*Here Comes Rusty* is the story of a reluctant dog track owner who tries to outrun his problems with “the bet of a lifetime.” Many fans arrived early to greet the cast and crew and get the best seats, and the room was packed with a lively crowd just prior to showtime. The reuniting of cast, crew and extras seemed to make a big splash but William Ross Smith, co-writer and producer, seemed to make fans the most excited. He, like others, brought along his family to experience the wonder of the screening.

# Greyhound Bytes

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Mobile local Thomas Walker appeared as an extra in the movie and was also in attendance. In a post-screening interview, he said it was “super hilarious,” and that he wasn’t just saying that because “you could see [him] in multiple scenes throughout!”

Walker later revealed that he can’t wait until it’s released in theaters nationwide.

“The chemistry of the cast was out of this world, especially the dynamic comedy duo, Mark Borhardt, and Theo LePetit-dancer Crane,” Walker said, adding that he felt the soundtrack stood out, and “Col. Bruce Hampton and Brandon Niederauer rocked! This kid Brandon Niederauer has natural talent that shines through, and his guitar skills are out of this world.”

The showing at Carmike Wynnsong theater was a huge success and a special treat for Alabama, where the movie production

scene is growing every year. Attendee Diane Potts Hall, of the Mobile Film Commission, quipped, “I get to work with the most talented film family,” and expressed gratitude to *Here Comes Rusty* for choosing Mobile as a location, and for a “fun night [of] laughter and meeting new friends.”

Watch the *Here Comes Rusty* teaser on [the movie’s official website](#).

## **A Day in the Life of Danny, the Reading Greyhound**

LONDON, England — There is something about being in the presence of a VIP. The adoring fans screaming your name, asking for a picture with you, tickling your ears. Wait, what?

In this case, VIP stands for Very Important Pooch.

It is all in a day’s work for Danny, who is part of The Kennel Club Bark & Read

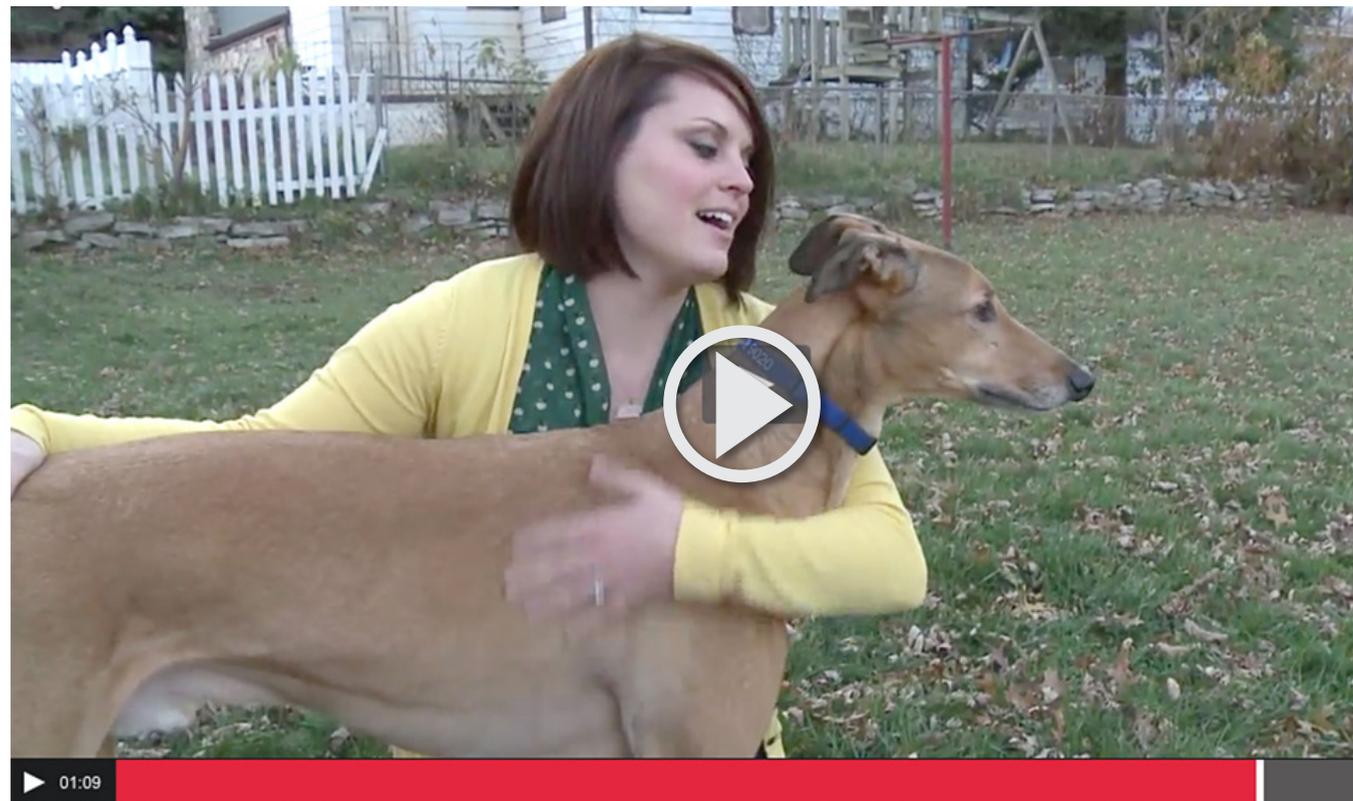
Foundation - Reading Education Assistance Dogs program in the United Kingdom and is also being part of the Corridor Therapy Dogs program in the United States.

Read more at the [Examiner.com](#).

## **Greyhound Saves Diabetic Owner**

LINCOLNSHIRE, UK — A 5-year-old Greyhound has repeatedly helped to save the life of a diabetic North Lincolnshire woman when her blood sugar levels have fallen dangerously low. Michele Sturman, 57, who has Type 1 diabetes, was first woken by Toby, a former racing Greyhound, in the early hours of the morning in September. Her blood sugar was as low as 2.3. Later the same day, he nudged her again when it dipped to 4.0. She now credits Toby as a lifesaver.

Read the complete story at the [Scunthorpe Telegraph](#).



to get the word out to find new owners for them. Heartland Greyhound Adoption is about to take on its biggest challenge, finding homes for retired racing dogs.

Read more and watch the news video at [Fox 42.com](http://Fox42.com)

## Heartland Greyhound Adoption Prepares for Bluffs Run Closing

OMAHA, Nebraska — In late December, a local Greyhound racetrack was scheduled to close, which could leave several dogs without homes. Now, an Omaha organization wants

## Australian Veterinarian Says Many Greyhounds Unsuitable for Rehoming

NEW SOUTH WALES, Australia — The New South Wales special commission of inquiry into the Greyhound racing industry has started its second day of hearings with a focus on the life

cycle of a Greyhound.

Specialist Greyhound veterinarian Dr. Karen Dawson told the inquiry that 40 percent of dogs bred for racing would never make the racetrack because of injury, unsuitability, failure to chase, or other reasons. Of those that did race, she said, many could not be rehomed in retirement or needed extensive rehabilitation because racing life had made them stressed, anxious, or predatory.

Read more at [ABC News Online](http://ABCNewsOnline.com).

## Greyhound Owner Pushing to Change Florida Law

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida — Dawn Alba says her dog went to a West Palm Beach veterinarian for a teeth cleaning and died months later. Now she's trying to change Florida law.

Gary the Greyhound was walking fine before the teeth cleaning, Alba says. But



surveillance video she obtained through the discovery process in her lawsuit against the veterinarian shows what happened behind closed doors. She says it shows a veterinarian technician sitting on the dog to keep it still. After that, the dog limps and can't walk normally.

"He was funny and silly with a great sense

of humor. Day after day I brought him back to the veterinarian trying to figure out why he couldn't walk after a teeth cleaning," Alba said.

Alba is now suing the veterinarian, and she is also trying to get the law changed because as it stands now the dog is viewed only as property according to Florida law.

Read the full story and watch the news

video at [Fox 4.com](http://Fox4.com).

## Dedicated Dog Rescuer Wins Prestigious Animal Action Award

WORCESTERSHIRE, UK — A dedicated dog rescuer received a special accolade at the House of Lords on Tuesday, October 20, paying tribute to her work in saving unwanted and abused dogs.

Pip Singleton, 48, the dog warden and animal welfare officer at Worcestershire Regulatory Services, picked up an animal action award from the International Fund for Animal Welfare at a ceremony presented by Bill Oddie.

Singleton was recognized for her 20 years of service as a dog warden, which sees her deal with about 2,500 dogs annually, as well as her role setting up the Evesham Greyhound and Lurcher Rescue charity.

Read more about the award at the [Worcester News](http://Worcester News).

# Greyhound Bytes



*Gibson The Greyhound*

## **Playful Pooch Badly Injured by Wire Fence at Dog Park**

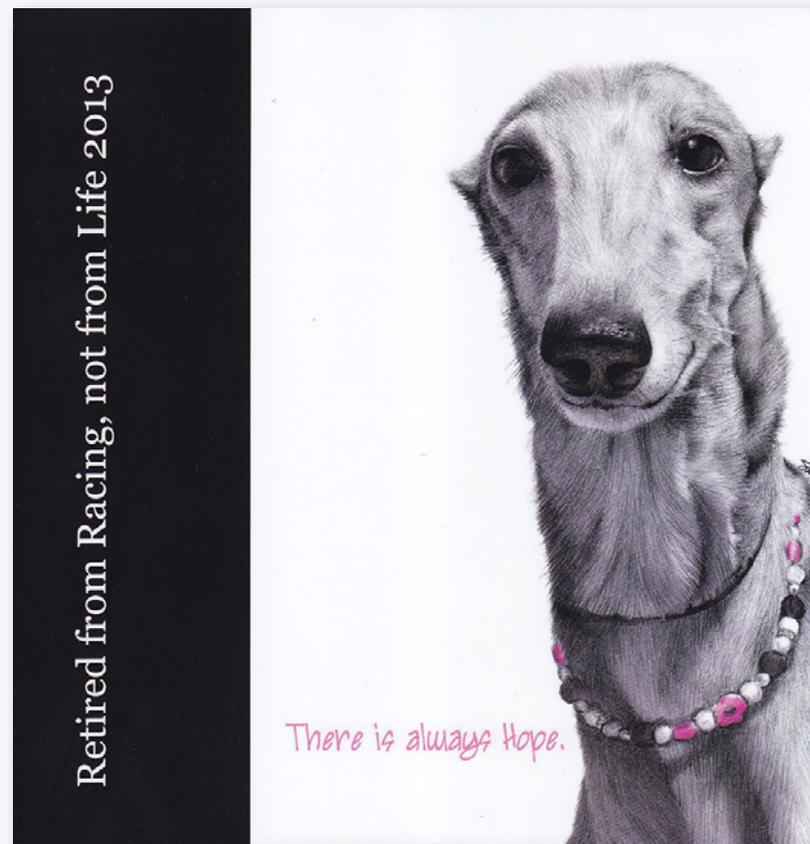
HAMILTON, Victoria, Australia — A morning romp at a Hamilton dog park ended with Gibson the Greyhound suffering horrific wounds to his leg and his owners forking out \$1,200 in veterinarian bills.

Tanya Breen and her daughter, Tanwen Ward, were exercising Gibson at Braithwaite Park on Friday when the 9-year-old Greyhound ran full speed into a strained wire fence, slicing his front right leg. Braithwaite Park is a designated dog exercise area.

Read the complete story and watch the news video at [Stuff.co.nz](http://Stuff.co.nz) ■



Have you seen a news item about Greyhounds that you think should be included in *Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine*? E-mail a link to [editor@adopt-a-greyhound.org](mailto:editor@adopt-a-greyhound.org).



## Books for a Cause

The “Retired from Racing, not from Life” books are published annually to support the Greyhound Health Initiative.

By Stacy Pigott

*Retired from Racing, not from Life*

Blurb Inc.

56 – 80 pp.

\$2.99 – \$41.06

If you are a fan of the *Celebrating Greyhounds* Calendar and coffee table books, you’ll love *Retired from Racing, not from Life*. Dubbed as an art book, the

annual project of True North Greyhounds is part book, part art, and all beautiful.

The 2015 edition marks the fifth printing in the series. **Each edition** is like a miniature

coffee table book, measuring 7-inches by 7-inches. The book can be purchased with a soft cover, hard cover with dust jacket, or hard cover with image wrap. A digital e-book is also available for download.

Each page of *Retired from Racing, not from Life* features a full-color picture, sometimes with accompanying text written by the person who submitted the photo. Many of the photos are candid pictures of Greyhounds, and — let's be honest — who doesn't like looking at photos of beautiful Greyhounds?

The captions can be equally as touching, such as this one written by Linda Sheffield in the **2011 edition**: "Fatpat woke up every morning a happy boy, he loved to be cuddled when he woke up and he always had a kiss ready. He always made contact with every person in a room, even if they were afraid of dogs — especially if they were, actually. He

would go stand very still and look at them, encouraging them to pet him through that look in his eyes, and would not go away until the did. They then would know there was nothing to be afraid of. I loved him so much." Getting to know the Greyhounds through their adopters' eyes makes each picture even more special.

A pleasant surprise is the inclusion of all forms of Greyhound artwork, not just photographs. Adopters have submitted paintings of their Greyhounds, as well as drawings and sketches. There are photographs of quilts, jewelry, and crocheted pieces, all paying tribute to the regal countenance, and sometimes silly nature, of the Greyhound.

If you are the kind of person who enjoys giving gifts with a purpose, you'll like the *Retired from Racing, not from Life* books even more. One hundred percent of the

proceeds are donated to the Greyhound Health Initiative and sent directly from the publisher. True North Greyhounds, which compiles and creates the books, receives no money from the project. ■

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*About the author: Stacy Pigott is the Editor-In-Chief of Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine. She lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with her Greyhounds, Gypsy and Greta, and one honorary Greyhound, Jewel the Australian Cattle Dog mix. She fosters Greyhounds for Greyhounds Unlimited, which serves the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.*

# Ask the Expert: Resource Guarding — Unwanted Protection

Do you know what resource guarding is, and why your Greyhound does it?

*By Deb Levasseur CTB (Certified Dog Trainer and Behavior Therapist)*

**R**esource guarding is not uncommon among dogs. In fact, it is a very natural behavior for them. In the wild, it can keep them alive. When dogs start guarding things from us, however, it becomes a dangerous behavior that must be addressed. In this article we will discover what resource guarding really is, determine the best course of action to safely curb this behavior, and explore practical training techniques and exercises for this issue.

Resource guarding is when a dog protects and keeps us away from what he feels is a valuable resource. It can be anything — not just food. It can be a favorite sleeping area or even a favorite person. Dogs also tend to guard items they found or hunted for, as this adds enormous value to the item. For example, if your Greyhound finds a



*Orion (WW's Castaway), adopted by Cheryl Vought and family, of Rockland, Maine, through Maine Greyhound Placement Service.*



*Brick, adopted by Marissa Beauvais through Allies for Greyhounds in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

bone while out for a stroll or picks something enticing out of the garbage, he may have a stronger tendency to guard that item. Many owners are shocked by resource guarding, but this is actually quite a common issue.

Resource guarding is not a sign of dominance, and your Greyhound is most likely exhibiting anxiety when he displays this behavior. This guarding can stem from your Greyhound never having been given a good reason to trust you with his prized possession. If he growls while guarding, remember that he is simply displaying a good and useful form of communication that he uses when lower-level signals were ignored, or it may be that the threat perceived was too immediate for a more subtle signal. It is not an act of defiance. Dogs communicate with their body language, facial expressions, and vocal signals. If we eliminate the growl through punishment, there is no other warning signal before a bite. When guarding, the hound may stiffen, lower

their body over the item, freeze, lip-lift, or growl. If the owner misses these signals, assumes they are unimportant, or even mislabels the freeze as calm, the Greyhound could be forced to bite.

The first step in curbing this unwanted behavior is to clearly outline your Greyhound's triggers and tolerance threshold. The triggers refer to the items he guards. The tolerance threshold refers to the distance you are from the hound when a reaction is provoked. You will need to keep track of this information to be able to see if you are making progress in curbing the behavior.

Secondly, modify the guarding behavior by changing the way your Greyhound feels about the situation instead of simply punishing the behavior. Punishing a growling hound increases the perception of threat for a canine who is already quite stressed. When a Greyhound is in an extreme state of stress and fear, a bite is very likely. You should proactively train and teach your hound at a time when you both are calm.

Finally, in order to prevent growling from becoming a learned behavior, you should not appear frightened or intimidated by his display. You do not want your hound to learn that growling keeps people away. It is important to diffuse resource guarding situations in a non-confrontational manner. Always remain calm and use a low and confident voice while moving away immediately. However, you want it to appear like you are not backing down, but rather just disgusted with the whole situation. For example, you could say, "What a bad boy!", and walk away and ignore him for ten minutes.

Here are some key components to create a positive association when your Greyhound is feeling uneasy with a situation:

- Provide a high-value item to trade with your Greyhound when you need to take an object away from him. The key to this is that it must be something more valuable in the eyes of your hound. If your Greyhound is not readily leaving the item, your trade item is not of high enough value to him.
- Add better food into his bowl every meal time if your Greyhound has a tendency to guard his dish. Start by throwing some chicken or dried liver into his bowl at a distance that is under his tolerance threshold and gradually decrease your distance from his bowl as he becomes more comfortable. Watch for signs of stress and be sure to back away and proceed more slowly if he appears uncomfortable.
- Do not take anything away from him while working on resource guarding as it may reinforce his idea that humans cannot be trusted to leave his possessions alone. Proving you can take away the prized object will only increase the mistrust and worsen the guarding behavior.
- Do not be confrontational with a Greyhound who has issues with resource guarding, but rather strive to be a benevolent leader who can be trusted.

### **Tips for resolving resource guarding issues include the following:**

- When you are not proactively working on the issue, put away toys, bones, and other items that your Greyhound guards. Bring back problematic items only after the treatment program has been completed.
- If your Greyhound guards his food bowl, take away his dish and hand-feed his meals for a minimum of two weeks. If he is nervous about eating from your hand, you can toss the food towards him. Speak to your hound gently during this exercise to keep it a pleasant experience.
- Work on the Drop it Exercise two times per day for at least two to three weeks. Work your way up to peanut butter Kongs®, brand new crown knuckle bones, and other prized possessions. You must always stay under your Greyhound's tolerance threshold for this. Slow and steady wins the race.
- Begin playing fetch with your hound. This is a

good game because it teaches the Greyhound that when he brings something back to you, it means the game and the fun continues. If he keeps the item, the fun is over.

- Remember all dogs growl at one time or another. Growling is a normal canine behavior. We just have to know what it means.

### The Drop it Exercise:

Dropping on cue is an important safety precaution for all dogs, although this is particularly important for resource guarders. We know how dogs love to pick up objects in their mouths and one day that may be a dangerous item such as a dropped pill, chicken bone, or even a small animal. For this reason, it is important for your Greyhound to learn how to drop objects on command.

### Steps:

1. Start when your hound has a very low value item in his possession. You could give a low value toy to him intentionally for practice.



2. Offer an item of much greater value to him in exchange. For example, you can offer a very smelly treat in exchange for an old, boring toy.
3. Wait until your hound drops the toy willingly and pick it up as you give the treat directly to him.
4. Give the toy back to your hound immediately after the treat has been consumed. This is a win-win situation for the Greyhound as he gets a good treat while keeping his stuff.
5. Repeat the game, but begin giving the verbal cue "drop it." Show the treat and give the cue.

Practice this exercise a couple of times a day, starting with low value items, and work your way up slowly to the highest value items for your Greyhound. Never proceed to the next item if the hound is not completely comfortable and giving up the previous item. The situation must always be set up for you and your hound to win. Be prepared to prevent resource guarding outside the home. Always carry treats so that if he picks up something on the walk you have a treat to exchange.

For additional information concerning resource guarding, consult the book *Mine* by Jean Donaldson. You also may require the assistance of a positive dog trainer to resolve this issue because resource guarding can be a symptom of other issues. This assistance may include implementing a Nothing In Life Is Free program (NILIF), a positive leadership program, or positive reinforcement obedience, or manners training. There are also other types

of guarding such as territorial aggression and space aggression which are different from resource guarding and are therefore not addressed in this article.

Dropping items reliably on cue is a safety precaution that all dogs should be taught, not just known resource guarders. Dogs need to chew and have various bones and play things at their disposal. As always, the most important tip is to learn as much as possible about canine body language. This will assist you in being able to better gauge how your Greyhound is feeling and to realize when he is feeling anxious or uncomfortable. Our Greyhounds are trying to communicate so much to us using their bodies; if only we would listen. Have fun training and your best friend will be having fun as well! ■

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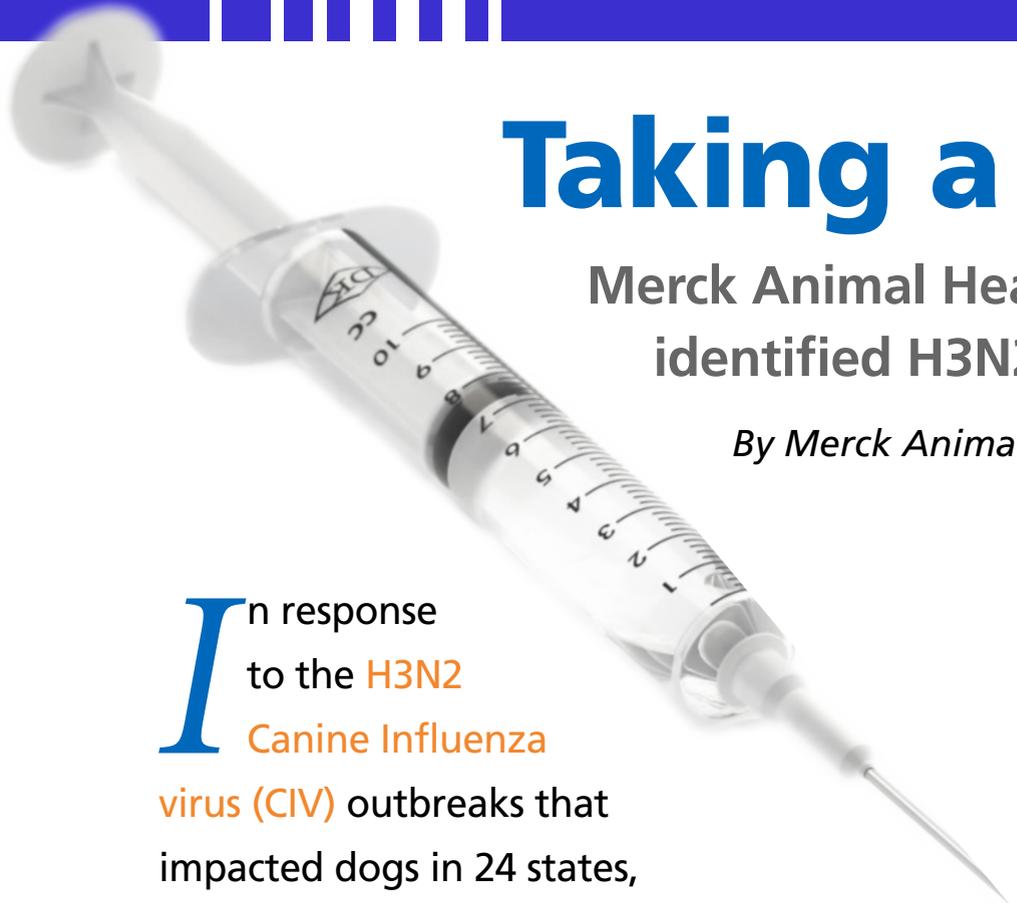
*About the author: Deb Levasseur, CTB Canine Behavior Therapist, is the president and founder of Maritime Greyhound Adoption Program based in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.*



# Taking a Shot at Canine Influenza

Merck Animal Health has pioneered a vaccine against the newly identified H3N2 strain of Canine Influenza.

*By Merck Animal Health*



**I**n response to the **H3N2 Canine Influenza virus (CIV)** outbreaks that impacted dogs in 24 states, Merck Animal Health announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued a conditional product license for a vaccine to protect against this newly identified strain of CIV. Canine Influenza Vaccine H3N2 became available to U.S. veterinarians Monday, November 23.

“We have a long history of bringing innovative products to the market that truly impact the health and well-being of animals,

and this vaccine is another example of our deep commitment to animal health and veterinarians,” said K.J. Varma, BVSc, Ph.D., Diplomate ACVCP, senior vice president of global research and development for **Merck Animal Health** (known as MSD Animal Health outside the United States and Canada). “Building on our legacy of vaccine expertise, we are excited to be able to offer a cutting-edge product that will protect dogs against this virulent strain of CIV, and further strengthen our position as the leader in vaccines and canine influenza.”

Since the outbreaks began in Spring 2015, Merck Animal Health focused on creating greater awareness of the canine health threat, as well as supporting veterinarians and pet

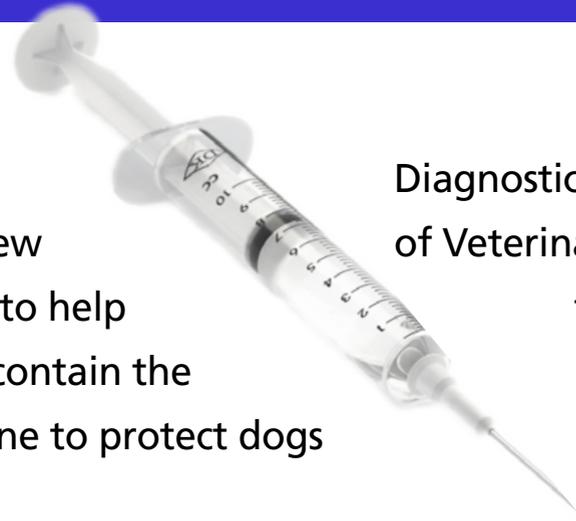
owners through information and education to help protect the health of dogs and minimize any further spread.

“Early on, we suspected veterinarians were dealing with an outbreak of canine influenza and not kennel cough, which spurred us to implement the collection of nasal and pharyngeal samples from sick dogs that were tested by **Cornell University**,” said Kathleen Heaney, DVM, director of companion animal technical services at Merck Animal Health. “We came to realize what was actually unfolding was the transmission of an influenza strain — H3N2 — never before seen in the United States. Based on the highly contagious nature of the strain, the severity of clinical disease, and the

rate at which we were seeing newly diagnosed cases, we knew we needed to act fast — both to help veterinarians and pet owners contain the outbreaks and develop a vaccine to protect dogs against it.”

According to clinical studies by researchers at the [University of Wisconsin](#), the CIV H3N2 may be shed for an extended period of time — up to 24 days, which is far longer than what is seen with CIV H3N8. As a result, the infection can spread quickly among social dogs in inner cities, doggie daycares, boarding facilities, dog parks, sporting and show events, and any location where dogs commingle.

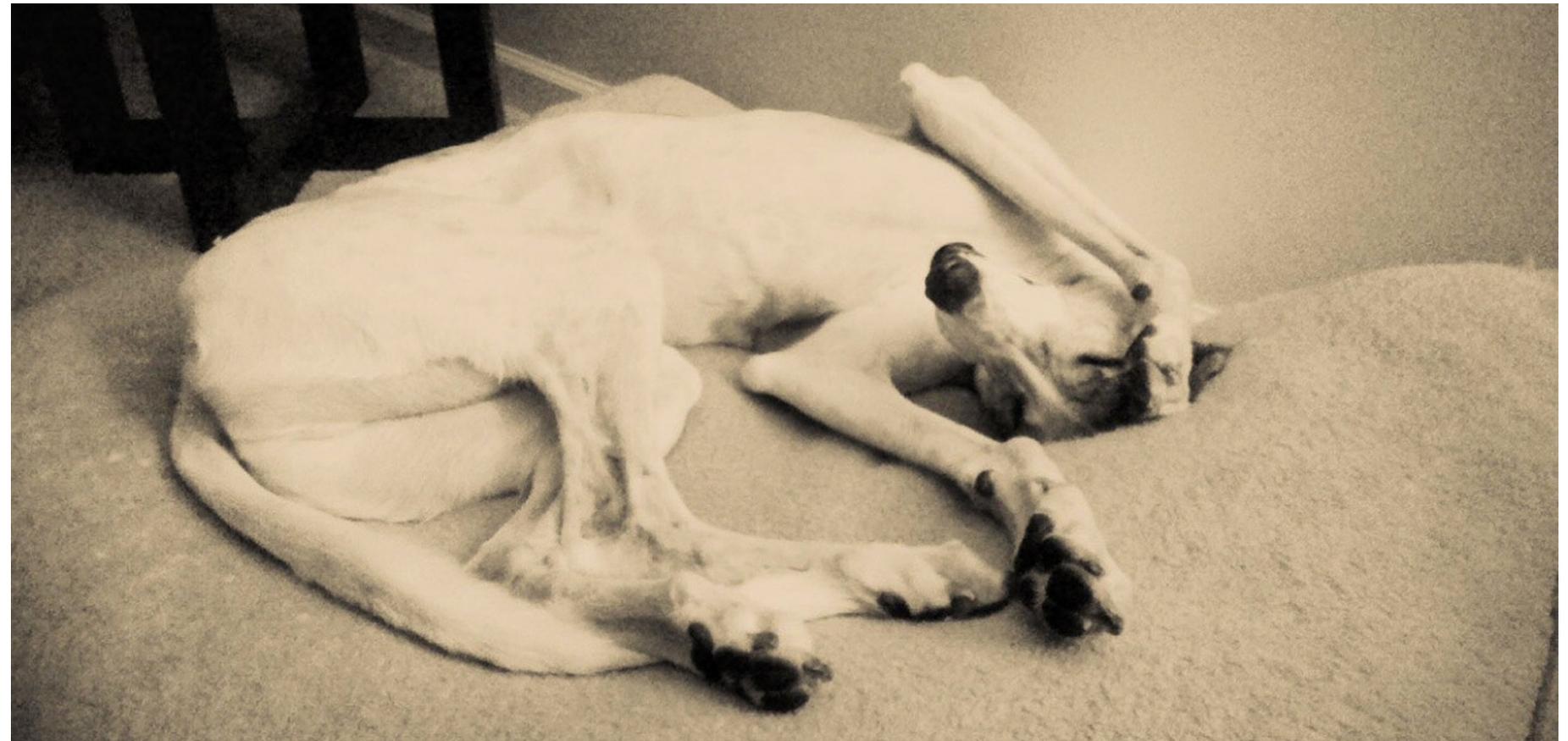
“Based on experimental studies in Asia and the rate of spread we’ve observed, I would estimate that H3N2 produces 10 times more virus than H3N8, which makes it far more contagious,” said Edward Dubovi, Ph.D., professor of virology and director of the virology laboratory at the Animal Health



Diagnostic Center at Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. “Preventing the transmission of the disease through vaccination is highly recommended for those dogs that have lifestyles that put them at greater risk.”

Clinical signs of CIV H3N2 in

dogs include coughing, fever, lethargy, and interstitial pneumonia. CIV can be spread by direct contact with respiratory discharge from infected dogs, through the air via a cough or sneeze, and by contact with contaminated objects, such as dog bowls and clothing, or by people moving between infected and uninfected



*Boondoc, adopted by Dan and Kim Jankowski of Dublin, Ohio.*



Chanel, adopted by Evelyn Lemire.

dogs. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there is no evidence of transmission of the virus from dogs to people.

The Canine Influenza Vaccine H3N2 is recommended for healthy dogs 6 weeks of age or older as an aid in the control of disease associated with **canine influenza virus H3N2 infection**. The type A, subtype H3N2 virus has been chemically inactivated and combined with an adjuvant designed to enhance the immune response. The vaccine is conditionally licensed and there is a reasonable expectation of efficacy.

As part of its continuing support of science and healthy animals, Merck Animal Health is continuing its work within the industry to help develop a better understanding of this disease, including its participation on the H3N2 task force created earlier this year, hosting educational webinars for veterinarians, and providing informational materials on managing the outbreak for

clinics and pet owners.

For more information about CIV or to access CIV materials, please visit [doginfluenza.com](http://doginfluenza.com). ■

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*About the author: Merck is a global healthcare leader working to help the world be well. Merck Animal Health, known as MSD Animal Health outside the United States and Canada, is the global animal health business unit of Merck. Through its commitment to the Science of Healthier Animals™, Merck Animal Health offers veterinarians, farmers, pet owners, and governments one of the widest range of veterinary pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and health management solutions and services. Merck Animal Health is dedicated to preserving and improving the health, well-being, and performance of animals. It invests extensively in dynamic and comprehensive research and development resources and a modern, global supply chain. Merck Animal Health is present in more than 50 countries, while its products are available in some 150 markets.*

# Getting Something for Nothing

The Greyt Non-Event has been a successful fundraiser for the Greyhound Adoption League of Texas.

*By Shannon Forrest*

**T**he success of a Greyhound adoption organization can be determined by a number of factors. Volunteers are important to staff events and attend meet and greets. Foster homes are essential to care for dogs and prepare them for permanent homes. And a good working relationship with those who provide dogs is a must. Like it or not, the most coveted element is money. Without income, everything else is moot.

Fundraising sounds so simple and yet, can be remarkably difficult. In a perfect world — at least to Greyhound proponents — people would repeatedly give without being asked. In reality, however, this passive methodology rarely begets a sustainable



*Mona, adopted by Christy and Brent Pimm, participated in the Greyt Non-Event.*

revenue stream. So it's up to the adoption group to find novel approaches to generate funds. Sure there's the occasional altruistic gesture; but for the most part potential donors are looking for a quid pro quo exchange. Whether it's an auction, wine tasting, or similar outing, the participant donates in exchange for an experience or a material good.

When it comes to events, two choices exist: annual and one time. Each has distinct challenges, but a commonality between the two is the need to generate interest and, hence, attendance. Planning either event tends to generate more questions. Is it appealing? Who does it target? What should the ticket cost?

Adoption groups led by an executive board or committee likely address these queries in the same way — at a meeting. And that's exactly what happened in the summer of 2012 as the Greyhound Adoption League of Texas (GALT) pondered ways to generate funds going into the fall.

As it typically went, the fundraising portion of the forum involved tossing out ideas and delineating the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. Anybody who's been through it knows the process. It's a constant waxing and waning that ranges from inexorable excitement to feigned smiles meant to disguise



*Nina, owned by Sasha Loffredo, had her picture taken by Diaz and Diaz Photography for the Greyt Non-Event.*

inner groans.

For GALT, optimizing the timing of standalone events is essential. Each November, the organization builds and staffs a Christmas-themed store that includes photos with Santa and holiday sundries. It runs through December and is followed in February by the biggest fundraiser of the year, an annual dinner and auction. Both require significant resources, which is a major obstacle for a group that relies on volunteers.

When it comes to staffing, Julia Dietsch, GALT's volunteer coordinator, says, "A lot of volunteers are repeat volunteers. It can be hard finding new blood, keeping everyone engaged, and at the same time avoiding burnout."

Julia validates the long-standing belief that it's more challenging to get people to sign up for labor-intensive endeavors and that people overwhelmingly prefer occasions when they get to play with dogs (or bring their own). She confides that one strategy to keep morale high is to inform volunteers about the amount of money raised at each event. It's a measurement of success that stimulates a sense of accomplishment and optimism for a job well done.

But every now and then long-term volunteers can get a case



*Odin, adopted by Suzanne Burke, was a willing participant in the Greyt Non-Event, as long as he could keep his ball.*

of opportunity cost regret. In simple form — apologies to economists — opportunity cost is what is theoretically lost by engaging in an activity. For example: If a person forgoes a movie to attend a baseball game, the opportunity cost of the game is missing the movie. While it doesn't have to be monetary, when it comes to volunteering return on investment can be a factor.

Imagine volunteering outside for six hours in the hot summer. It's revealed that after expenses, the organization netted around \$50 per volunteer — arguably a low number, but necessary to illustrate the concept. If the outcome was known in advance, would a volunteer attend or just write a check for \$50? In other words, would someone pay not to do something?

Some might say it's a silly question, but it garnered serious consideration by the GALT fundraisers during that summer meeting. In reality, the concept is an underpinning of behavioral psychology and goes all the way back to B.F. Skinner. It's technically called negative reinforcement, or getting a behavior to occur by making something undesirable go away. It's analogous to the sound a car makes when the seatbelts are not used. Using a seatbelt is beneficial in the long run, but in the heat of the moment, putting it on grants immediate relief from an aural nuisance. In short, people do things for positive reasons



*Sancho, owned by Johanna Tomenson, was happy to be part of the Greyt Non-Event.*

but they also might do things to get out of having to do other things. Fortuitously, a holiday weekend provided the perfect opportunity to test the theory.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the purpose of Labor Day is that it “constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country.” The holiday is traditionally associated with cookouts, picnics, and relaxation. It’s a day off that most consider an opportunity to avoid activity. Remarkably, the Greyhound seems to have a similar penchant; albeit every other day as well. Based on these correlations, a plan was hatched and the “non-event event” was proposed. At first, it was little more than an inside joke for those at the table. They bantered back and forth, shouting out the tagline from the Seinfeld sitcom, “It’s a show about nothing.” Then, an epiphany struck.

No shifts to fill. No setup and breakdown. No driving or transporting dogs. Unanimous approval was a given.

There was more to the idea than just counting money, but in the end it required

a modicum of effort. Most important, the fall date dovetailed nicely between annual events and provided a breather for the volunteers. Part of the attraction was that the idea was a bit edgy and millennial. After



*Takoda, owned by Tonya Galvan, took his Non-Event participation seriously.*

all, how does one attend a non-event? Just like any other, this one required a theoretical admission. Included in the price was a T-shirt to commemorate the experience. After paying a \$25 fee and selecting a shirt size, participants received a virtual ticket instead of the usual printed or emailed version. When the web-based transaction was complete, the payer became an official attendee and was reminded that the event began and ended on Labor Day.

It's important to point out that no matter how much deliberate sarcasm and humor is attached to advertising a scheme like this, someone will seriously ask for directions to the venue. Groups attempting an event like this should prepare to respond with as much tact, decorum, or sardonic retort as deemed appropriate.

The concept that initially started on Labor Day in 2012 is now a GALT tradition, marketed as the Greyt Non-Event. Each year

the T-shirt design changes but it always depicts a Greyhound in a sedentary pose (the kickoff year depicted the roach). Instead of preordering shirts, GALT mails them to participants after the event. Doing so reduces overhead by avoiding the expense of carrying unused inventory.

One potential pitfall when dealing with apparel is that manufacturers typically set pricing based on the size of the order. A small number of participants combined with low ticket prices can erode profits. Fortunately for GALT, events coordinator Anne Marie Criotis is savvy in the field of sports marketing. Anne Marie has the appropriate contacts to negotiate significant discounts or get the shirts donated.

A big difference between the inaugural and subsequent years is the shift toward leveraging social media. GALT encourages virtual attendees to submit online photos of

how their day is being spent. It's a potpourri of laziness, as Greyhound adopters attempt to one up each other with egregious displays of inactivity. In addition to stimulating web-based interactions, the real-time photos along with GALT commentary serve another purpose. They alert followers that the event is in progress and concomitantly, tickets are still available. Annual proceeds fluctuate but the combined four-year profit to date is approximately \$3,400. It's proof that you really can get something for nothing if it's for the right cause. ■

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*About the author: Shannon Forrest is a professional pilot and freelance writer. He volunteers for the Greyhound Adoption League of Texas, and currently has two adopted Greyhounds.*

# Around Town Hounds

What started as a walking group has turned out to be so much more.

By Stacy Pigott



*Some hounds attended the December 2012 walk decked out in Christmas cheer.*

**J**t all started with a Greyhound named Jackson. Today, more than 150 people are members of Around Town Hounds, a monthly walking group and close-knit sighthound community in the Richmond, Virginia, area.

“I had a Greyhound named Jackson and he was other breed averse. Introducing him to another dog, for instance a Labrador Retriever, was difficult. It seemed that Jackson didn’t perceive non-sighthounds as dogs,” said Deborah Messersmith, who founded Around Town Hounds in 2010. “It’s funny, it didn’t have to be a Greyhound, but as long as it was a sighthound, he was fine. He was just really non-sighthound breed averse.”

Wanting a safe place to walk Jackson while allowing him to socialize with other sighthounds, Messersmith called on a few friends. Those first walks consisted of three people and seven Greyhounds, including Messersmith’s Greyhound Therapy Dog, Harvey.



*The popular Christmas in Williamsburg festival is an annual outing for Around Town Hounds.*

“That was really good for Jackson,” Messersmith said. He loved socializing with the other Sighthounds. He was very comfortable and thoroughly enjoyed those walks.”

Word started to get out. People began emailing Messersmith, asking if they could join the group.

“We started adding people to the group, one by one, and we became bigger and bigger,” Messersmith said. “I took on the

role as the organizer of the group and we came up with a name for it. I planned all of the walks and used email to send the event announcements. It was really great for the dogs. They enjoyed the socialization, especially newly adopted dogs.”

Messersmith wanted to make sure the people enjoyed it as well and began planning walks to interesting places around Richmond. The area is rich in historical sites with plenty of parks to visit.

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*“The one thing I would say is, that besides making great friends we can call on for advice on our hounds is how it has helped my hounds with socializing with other hounds and people.”*

— Barbara Melton

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“A lot of people in the group hadn’t had opportunities to explore the area,” Messersmith explained. “So the members have



*The Grandview Nature Preserve, on the coast in Hampton, Virginia, was the site of walks in November 2012 and October 2014.*

gone to a lot of places that they otherwise wouldn’t. That’s been fun for the people and the dogs, too.”

The walks have included Richmond-area locations, such as the University of Richmond, Canal Walk, Windsor Farms, Forest Hill Park, and Church Hill. On occasion, the group travels farther away from Richmond to accommodate members in other counties. A

favorite special holiday walk is in Williamsburg, Virginia, where members view Christmas decorations with their hounds. Totopotomy Creek Battlefield, Pocahontas State Park, and the Dutch Gap Conservation Area are some of the outlying spots Around Town Hounds has visited.



*The azalea gardens at Bryan Park made for a beautiful walk in April 2011.*

As the number of people and hounds showing up for the monthly walks grew, Messersmith realized the importance of pre-planning. She began scouting out various locations, and would make the walk in advance by herself to identify any potential problems.

“It’s a lot of work, but when I schedule the walks, I go and scout out the location first,” she said. “I make sure that there’s ample parking. I try to keep the walks at about an hour long, so I plan the direction of the walk. I also look at

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*“I’ve met so many wonderful human beings and hounds. I’m still fascinated by the fact that there are so many of us that share these wonderful hounds.”*

— Carla Ruffin

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the terrain to make sure it will be comfortable for the dogs. I look for off-leash dogs. If it’s a place or a park with off-leash dogs, I try to avoid it. So it takes some planning, but it’s fun.”

News of the group spread by word of mouth among Greyhound owners and the adoption groups in the surrounding areas. As more and more people requested to be added to the email

list, Messersmith began to realize the potential benefits of the community that was forming. Other sighthound owners began joining too, with Afghans, Deerhounds, Irish Wolfhounds, Galgos, Whippets, and Italian Greyhounds.

“At that point, we were opening up to more social interactions, which added a networking layer on top of the walks,” said Messersmith.

Taking the social interaction to the next level, Messersmith started a private Facebook page for Around Town Hounds. The page has

remained private for several reasons, first and foremost among them, security. Advertising a scheduled walk and having people check in on Facebook wasn't something Messersmith wanted to promote.

"We didn't want to advertise to others when we were away from our homes with our dogs," she said.

The private page includes guidelines and new member information. It also contains useful educational material, such as lost dog

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*"Around Town Hounds to me is a community of others who adore their dogs and enjoy being around people who feel the same."*

— Amy Heuay

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tips, and Google maps only searchable by members.

"We have two maps — an Around Town Hounds walk map, and a member map," Messersmith said. "The walk map is a record of

## 2010 The First Walk



*View a slideshow of walks*

all of the places we've been. The member map serves two purposes. It helps me plan walks based on our demographic information, but more importantly, in case of an emergency, members can check the map to see who's close

by. I know I'll use it if I have a hurt dog and need help ASAP."

Messersmith also didn't want the Facebook page to evolve into something negative, as can happen with public Facebook groups.



*Around Town Hounds welcomes all sighthounds, not just Greyhounds. Here, an Afghan Hound walks with the group that also includes breeds such as Italian Greyhounds and Whippets.*

Keeping the group private allows Messersmith to approve every request to join. It also gives members a sense of trust about the digital community they have joined.

“I wanted people to feel like they could talk and be honest about the things that related to their dogs. Maybe there’s a question — for

example, a training issue that you might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to share with a stranger, but it’s something that you might ask a friend. It’s really worked well.”

“That’s actually become a bigger thing, the networking between the folks in the group. They celebrate together. They grieve together.

They ask each other questions about medical issues. People ask others to watch their dogs. There’s just a lot of support,” Messersmith continued. “One of the advantages is that people actually know each other.

They aren’t reaching out to strangers. People have become friends. In a way, the walks have taken a little bit of a backseat to the social engagement between the group members.”

Group members have used the member maps to locate other Greyhound owners in their neighborhoods and plan their own play dates outside of Around Town Hounds events.

Another benefit Messersmith identified was the ability to call on the Around Town Hounds community to give back through local charities. Many of the city animal shelters are underfunded and have real needs. So Around Town Hounds has collected supplies at a monthly walks and donated them to the shelters.



*Around Town Hounds takes members to many places they wouldn't otherwise visit on their own.*

"If we hear of a group in need, I'll send out a message that at the next walk if people want to bring supplies I'll collect and deliver them," Messersmith said. She estimates that

the group does a charity drive a couple of times each year. In addition to local shelters, a local wildlife center has also benefited from Around Town Hounds' generosity. Another benefit is the ability to show people how quiet and well-behaved Sighthounds are. "We make a pretty big statement with 20-30 dogs walking calmly and quietly."

"The members have had a lot of fun with it and they really support each other. Members are constantly asking questions. We have a few really seasoned Greyhound owners that have had

hounds for 15-20 years. So they have a lot of experience and are really good support for the new adopters, especially with separation anxiety and other unknowns that new adopters face."

While Jackson passed away in 2013 and Harvey in 2014, Messersmith continues on with Greyhound Jimmy Chew and Galgo Oscar.

"We just had our fifth anniversary. I tried to figure out how many walks I've done; it's probably been 75 to 80 walks, which is a lot. 🏠

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*"Around Town Hounds is such a sharing and caring group. I look forward to all the walks. It's so much fun to meet new folks and the new Greyhounds. You never know who you will be walking and talking with as our Greyhounds lead us on the walk."*

— Beth Tacey

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# Deborah Messersmith's Five Tips to Start a Walking Group

## 1. Create group guidelines and rules.

I don't want others to view our group as people who walk their Greyhounds, dominating trails and not respecting other people enjoying the walk locations. I don't want any kind of negative view of the group or of Sighthounds. So enforcing a few rules is a little uncomfortable, but it is necessary. When we are in a park where people are running or biking, I instruct everybody to keep their dogs on a short lead. You don't want someone with a six-foot lead with a Greyhound at the end of it when there is a biker coming down the trail. They may get tangled up and someone could get hurt. You don't want your dog zig-zagging all over the trail when other people are trying to use it.

When we see dogs off-lead, we have

someone shout out, "Off-lead dog!" We try to draw our hounds close and are careful about the dog in the area that's off-lead. When a car is coming, I encourage our group to pull to the right side of the road, and stop.

Make sure that people are aware of rules. I occasionally post them on the Facebook page, so that new people can become familiar with them. I am sure many of the old-timers are tired of seeing them, but the new people need to learn them.

## 2. Keep the group private.

I would definitely recommend keeping the group private. I don't want to say that you should check the members, but at least you want to know that the members are coming because of some kind of connection. I'm

fairly certain that someone wouldn't recommend a new member to the group if they thought they would be negative or disrespectful. There are more pros than cons with this. Obviously, one of the cons is that people hear about the group but they can't find us. They don't really know the name but they want to ask more questions about it and they can't search and find us anywhere.

## 3. Plan in advance.

You should go out and plan the walk in advance. The first few that I did as a larger group, I said, "Hey, let's meet here." Sometimes there weren't enough parking spaces or the gravelly terrain hurt the dogs' paws, especially dogs with corns. I learned very quickly to go out in advance and do a scouting mission and that's been really helpful.

## 4. Pay attention to local events.

You have to pay attention to what events are going on in your area. Richmond is a very athletic town. We have a lot of marathons and bike races. You have to pay attention to the local events calendar. That way nothing will get in the way of your walk. Recently, we had the World Biking Championships here. That month, I had to reschedule the walk. Nobody could get through the city because they had so many streets blocked.

## 5. Have fun!

I love organizing things. I've made mistakes along the way, but now I have the process down. I like to get out and explore on my own, and I really enjoy planning the walks. It's been so much fun for me, and an absolutely worthwhile effort.

# The Search for Bella

One Greyhound owner answers the question, "What now?" when the search for another's lost hound is called off. *By Karen Fry McCormick*



**I** first came in contact with Greyhounds doing volunteer work for the Maryland Recycles campaign. At the local home and garden shows, the Maryland Recycles booth was only a couple booths away from the [Greyhound Pets of America/Maryland](#) booth. I had never met a Greyhound before and I was immediately drawn to them. They were so sweet, gentle, and beautiful.

A few weeks later I learned there would be a gathering of Greyhounds at the Howard County Fair. My oldest sister and I first visited the agility contests to check out her favorite breed, Golden Retrievers. We exited the building in search of the Greyhound gathering. Well, we certainly saw



*Sedona (Astar Royal Mover), adopted by Cheryl Vought of Rockland, Maine, through Maine Greyhound Placement Service.*

it before we heard it. There must have been 50 or more Greyhounds, and not a peep! Some were curled up in children's wading pools to cool down. The majority were just hanging out enjoying the company of the other Greyhounds and their owners. I was hooked!

Then it happened, I adopted my first Greyhound. I was beside myself with joy. Eight years later, with two beautiful Greyhounds in my home, I still find myself just staring at these elegant creatures as they lay sleeping and dreaming. To witness a Greyhound with faraway eyes transform into a family pet who loves his soft beds, toys, and treats, who looks into your eyes with love and devotion, is an incredible and profoundly rewarding journey.

So my heart sank when I read the words that the search for a lost Greyhound had been halted. No sightings, no word, no nothing. I experienced the dread, the grief,

the sleeplessness, and the second guessing that her family must be feeling.

For over a week, dedicated volunteers searched the area where Bella might be. Signs were posted. Robocall was implemented. Facebook served a useful purpose. Some volunteers even had the foresight to use a squawker like they use at the tracks to excite her and try to pull her closer. Hours and hours of searching, hoping, and praying, yet still — no Bella.

I was compelled to try and have something good come out of this. And that good is the opportunity to remind and caution owners of Greyhounds not to become complacent in their care of these unique, graceful, intelligent, and



*Porsche, adopted by Brevin Baker through Greyhound Pets of America - Indianapolis.*

loyal hounds.

We were taught to loop the leash around our wrist. To always have identification on your Greyhound. To never let your Greyhound off-leash. Even at annual events such as the Dewey Beach gatherings, I see Greyhounds running off-leash up and down the beach. Yes, it is a gorgeous sight. But to me, it is certainly not worth risking your Greyhound running off, never to be seen again. At meet and greets I am sometimes asked if a Greyhound would come back if he were allowed to run free. My response is I don't know, and I will never chance finding out.

Since the first posting of Bella's disappearance, I hug my Greyhounds a little harder and a little longer. I am all that more excited to return to the house to greet Penny's enthusiasm and sweet kisses and watch Pumpkin's mid-air circles. It is an honor to feed them, walk them, brush them, and love them unconditionally.

I think all the Greyhound owners in my circle feel the same. I hope and pray that Bella magically reappears at her owner's back door. I hope no one takes on the blame for her disappearance. It was an accident. Their Greyhound spooked and bolted.

And so I say to Bella's family, my prayers are with you. You gave her a wonderful life for all the days she was with you. Maybe she is being spoiled rotten by a family who has no idea of your frantic search. ■

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*About the author: Karen Fry McCormick and her husband, John, live in Parkville, Maryland, with two Greyhounds: Pumpkin, 10, and Penny, 5. Karen works as an estates and trusts paralegal and is an active volunteer with Greyhound Pets of America/Maryland.*



*Emmet Lyons, adopted by Matt and Christy Lyons, of Wakefield, Massachusetts, through Greyhound Options.*

# Bone Cancer in Greyhounds

A personal account of one owner's experiences with three Greyhounds and three cases of osteosarcoma.

By Sian Greenock



*Ernie and Sian, just after his bone cancer diagnosis 2014.*

**H**earing the words osteosarcoma, or bone cancer as it's more commonly called, strikes fear into the heart of every Greyhound owner. Most people who have been lucky enough to have owned a Greyhound will probably know someone who has lost one of these wonderful companions to bone cancer; in my case, I've been unfortunate enough to have been in that situation three times. Before I tell you my personal story, here are some basic facts about this immensely painful disease and why we desperately need to find a cure.

Bone cancer can strike in relatively young dogs, even as young as 5, although it most commonly occurs in dogs 7 or older. Male or female, small or large, it doesn't matter, and currently there is no consensus as to what causes osteosarcoma in Greyhounds or, for that matter, in other breeds of dogs commonly affected, such as Rottweilers and Boxers.

While it can affect any bone in the body, 75 to 85 percent of these cancers are found on the long bones, most commonly the legs, at the shoulder, wrist, or knee joints.

The disease begins inside the bone, initially causing an intermittent lameness but eventually causing constant, deep, and severe pain after just a short time. The bone weakens and can eventually break with minimal trauma or pressure, which is known as a “pathological” fracture. When that occurs, osteosarcoma becomes a real medical emergency.

Every Greyhound owner’s heart sinks when a pet begins to limp. For those who have been down this road before, you can’t help but automatically think *bone cancer*. A physical examination by a veterinarian can sometimes make apparent some bone pain; however, as Greyhounds are incredibly stoic creatures, more often than not they won’t vocalize their

discomfort in the early days. Your veterinarian will very likely recommend an X-ray to determine the cause of the pain. Depending on the stage of the bone cancer, the X-ray itself is often the only diagnostic tool needed, although early cases may be more ambiguous and require a follow-up X-ray in a few weeks. This is our experience in Ernie’s case.

If there is still doubt about cancer, a definitive diagnosis can usually be obtained through bone biopsy. Many vets and Greyhound owners don’t recommend this procedure, however, as the already fragile bone can break during the procedure. It is also an extremely painful process for dogs during recovery.

Among other diseases that can cause similar changes that can be detected on an X-ray are some bone infections, other types of bone tumors, and fungal infections of the bone. Thus it is vitally important you find a

veterinarian who is expert in diagnosing and treating bone cancer.

Once osteosarcoma has been diagnosed, the next stage is to take a deep breath and look at how to treat it; managing it requires a strong commitment, both financially and emotionally. Many people underestimate the emotional toll it can actually take. I have often described it as being like a rollercoaster, full of so many ups and downs. One day you can be crying tears of joy and the next tears of despair. You constantly question your decisions and, of course, at the end you forever wonder whether you did enough.

The treatment addresses two aspects of the disease: the pain and then the cancer itself. The only certainty is that you must commit to aggressive pain relief for the remainder of your Greyhound’s life. The pain of bone cancer is thought to be greater than almost any other disease, and it is continuous, non-

stop, and relentless. Even the strongest pain medications can fail to control this pain, so it is imperative that you and your veterinarian aggressively manage the disease. You must recognize when the pain can no longer be controlled and make the appropriate decision for your best friend, which as we all know is easier said than done.

I believe that when faced with the diagnosis for the first time, many Greyhound owners only want to listen to success stories and focus on those rather than the sad reality that most dogs don't make it. That is perfectly understandable. You want your dog to be "the one" who beats the odds, and if there's a chance, no matter how small, you're going to grab it with both hands. This is how we felt when Mou-Mou was diagnosed in 2011, despite it being our second experience with bone cancer.

Listed below are the treatment options available today. It has to be noted that only in very rare cases do dogs survive longer than 12 months. Even opting for amputation followed by chemotherapy doesn't always guarantee long-term survival.

The first treatment option is medical pain relief only. This is usually a combination of medications to control pain, followed by euthanasia when they fail to do so. The caution here is the difficulty in objectively judging pain. It's hard to know how much our pets are really suffering, and it's easy to think because they don't scream, they don't hurt. Please understand, most dogs suffer severe pain in silence.

I was convinced loss of appetite would be one of the main indicators of intense pain, but I now know that that's not always the case. Every dog is different when it comes

to pain management. With this treatment option, life expectancy is four months, although from our own experience with Ringo, pain relief tends to fail well before that.

Amputation and pain relief may sound drastic to those lacking experience with bone cancer, but amputation provides pain relief to 100 percent of the dogs who receive it. With amputation alone, the life expectancy remains at an average of four months, but the quality of life is improved and is apparent within weeks of the surgery. A friend once told me that dogs are born with three legs and a spare. I've seen over and over again how true that really is!

In most cases, amputation and chemotherapy improve life expectancy. Although amputation does not cure the disease, it does remove the excruciating pain

of bone cancer. With this option, the average life expectancy is one year. I believe most Greyhound owners focus on that goal, but in reality, only a lucky few reach this milestone.

Limb-sparing surgery is a fairly new technique adapted from human medicine and only carried out at specialist veterinary centers. The cancerous bone is removed and replaced with grafted bone, and the nearest joint is fused.

Radiotherapy can also be used to control pain. The tumor is irradiated, which can provide about four months of pain relief in about 65 percent of patients. Again, it will depend on the type of tumor as to whether this treatment is appropriate.

Sadly, it is likely that all these treatments will eventually fail, the pain will overcome your Greyhound again, and the cancer will prevail. When that day comes, the final gift you can give your pet is to relieve him or her of an impossible struggle. Euthanasia is

the beginning of your grief, but it is the end of their suffering, and with this disease it is something that must be faced, no matter how hard.

### **Ringo's Story:**

Ringo was our second Greyhound, adopted in 2005 from a charity in France, where we were living at the time. He had a long racing career in Ireland and was looking for his forever home at age 5. Ringo wouldn't accept a treat from us in the early days because he didn't recognize what it was, which was sad to see. He soon began to grow and it was really heart-warming to see his fantastic personality emerge. Eventually, he began to realize he could play and have fun. Slowly but surely, he gained confidence and began to live life to the fullest.

Sadly, just 18 months later, at the beginning of January 2007, Ringo began to limp intermittently. We took him to the



*Ringo.*

veterinarian's office straight away. Although we'd heard of bone cancer, we didn't really know anything about it; It was the furthest thing from our minds. We just assumed he had a strain, and after a week of rest and medication, he'd be as right as rain. So it came as a complete shock to be told that Ringo not only had bone cancer, but that it was also very advanced and had already spread. We were devastated and couldn't honestly take it in at that point. After a



*Ringo and Sian, Summer 2005.*

discussion with the veterinarian, we decided to try and keep Ringo pain-free as long as possible. In reality, that was just a matter of weeks. He lost his appetite within a few days of the diagnosis and could no longer get comfortable enough to sleep. Although I moved my bed to sleep on the floor next to

him, it still didn't bring him any comfort, so I knew it was time to say goodbye — just 18 months of retirement in a loving family home for a dog who truly deserved so much more. It really was heart-breaking to have to let him go so soon when he should have had the rest of his life ahead of him.

### **Mou-Mou's Story:**

After Ringo's death, we decided to adopt again, and Mou-Mou and Ernie came into our lives. Mou was a 3-year-old Greyhound and Ernie was just 20 months old. Life was great and both dogs brought some much-needed sunshine back into our lives for the next few years. Then, during the summer of 2011, Mou began limping completely out of the blue and my heart sank. I couldn't believe this was going to happen to us again.

We took her straight to the veterinarian for X-rays. There was no disputing the fact that she had a tumor growing on her front



*Ernie and MouMou, Summer 2007.*

left wrist joint. This time, having done lots of research on the subject, we knew we wanted to pull out all the stops and do whatever it took to help our girl. She was scheduled to have her front left leg amputated the following morning.

Mou had just turned 8 years old when she was diagnosed, and although she'd done some racing, she wasn't quick enough and was given away before her third birthday. We



*MouMou a couple of weeks after amputation.*

thought she was strong enough and healthy enough to cope with life on three legs. The surgery went well and Mou came home the following day. We had no idea what to expect and wondered if the veterinarian would carry her out to the car, but in fact she came racing out from the back on three legs, dragging the doctor behind her. We were amazed by her progress and so pleased to have her back.

Her recovery took about three weeks. We

returned to the veterinarian's office several times as the stitches kept pulling apart and the wound had to be re-cleaned and re-stitched. Once the stitches came out for good, Mou made a fantastic recovery. She was as fast on three legs as she was on four, and we had to keep telling her to slow down.

One of the best moments was when she hopped into the kitchen and jumped up on to the kitchen units to see what she could steal. Most dog owners spend all their time telling their dogs not to jump up in the kitchen, but after everything she'd been through, we were thrilled to see her back to her old ways! We had the old Mou back and at that point, the future looked so much brighter.

Since the best chance of survival is given by amputation followed by chemotherapy, we proceeded with that course of treatment after further consultation with our veterinarian. The cost had to be taken into consideration, as the chemotherapy was going to be the



*MouMou a couple of months post amputation — looking fit and well, and enjoying life.*



*MouMou a few weeks post amputation, September 2011.*

most expensive part of the process so far. Mou tolerated the chemo really well with no side effects and even used to walk into the veterinarian's office for her treatment with her tail wagging and without a backward glance at us!

By January 2012, four and a half months after the diagnosis and with only one more chemotherapy session to go, Mou started to slow down a bit. One day, at the beginning of February, when she was outside in the garden she turned to come back indoors and just fell to the floor screaming. We ran outside and carried her back into the house and she seemed to be OK when she stood again, but we decided to see what the veterinarian thought and took her in as a precaution.

After a full set of X-rays, we received the terrible news that the cancer had returned. This time, she had a tumor growing on her spine, which was pressing on her spinal cord

and starting to cause hind-end paralysis. A life confined to the sofa would have been no life for the girl who loved to run and feel the wind on her face. So yet again, we were forced to make the heart-breaking decision to let her go. She was with us just over five months post-diagnosis despite the amputation and the chemotherapy, and we were absolutely devastated that our brave girl had lost her fight.

I don't know how I found my way out of the veterinarian's office that day after saying goodbye to Mou, and I only vaguely remember the veterinarian patting me on the shoulder as I walked away with tears pouring down my face. I'd never felt as bereft as I did that day, having held our girl close as she slipped away.

### **Ernie's Story:**

This left us with Ernie, who became very withdrawn without his partner in crime. So at



*Ernie the day he was diagnosed with bone cancer.*

the end of 2012, we adopted Lily, a 4-year-old ex-racing Greyhound from Ireland, to keep him company. The two of them got along well and Ernie began to enjoy life again until just a few months ago, when he, too, began to limp.

Ernie had been limping occasionally on his back right leg since March 2014, but as he'd previously injured this leg, we couldn't be certain that wasn't the cause, rather than

anything sinister. However, having been in this exact same position twice before, we decided to make sure there was nothing seriously wrong and took him to the veterinarian for X-rays.

I remember holding my breath as we waited for the results, hoping and praying it wasn't bone cancer. To my complete and utter amazement, and of course sheer delight, nothing was visible on the X-ray. The veterinarian prescribed some strong arthritis medication for Ernie. The limping improved and Ernie seemed to be much better, but the veterinarian still wanted to do a follow up X-ray in a month, just to be certain there wasn't anything slow growing that wasn't visible on the initial X-ray.

We returned for the second X-ray in April, and again we were full of hope. Again, by some miracle the X-ray came back clear and Ernie was given a clean bill of health.



*Ernie with Lily, Summer 2012.*

For the next few months everything was fine until the middle of July, when suddenly Ernie began limping again. This time we also noticed a hard, bony lump just below his knee joint on his back right leg; it was quite hot to

touch. We knew straight away this wasn't going to have a good outcome. We made an appointment to see the veterinarian that day and, of course, the rest is history. That was the day my world fell apart yet again and the

tumor was finally visible on the X-ray.

The good news (if any can be sought at a time like this) was that this time around the cancer was less aggressive and the tumor slow-growing. It was more than likely that the cancer was already there back in March, but the tumor too small to see on the X-rays. The bad news was that Ernie was a big lad who already had a heart condition and arthritis, and so we had to make the difficult decision that amputation wasn't for him. If I'd have thought for one second that it had been the right thing for him and that it would have given him a better quality of life, I wouldn't have hesitated to go through it all again. But it really wasn't in his best interests. While it felt to some extent as though we were giving up on him, we opted for palliative care only.

In contrast to Ringo, Ernie spent just more than four months living with his bone cancer and living his life to the full. The pain killers

did a great job keeping the pain at bay. He continued to be the same old Ernie we knew and loved. Over the last four months, Ernie had several follow up X-rays that showed that the tumor hadn't yet started to eat away at the bone, which still looked very strong. That was always our main concern, because if his leg had broken, we'd never forgive ourselves; however, we also knew he wasn't ready to leave us. We had thought that as soon the X-rays showed the bone was weakening, that would be the time to yet again make that awful decision to set him free. That never happened.

Although outwardly the bone looked OK, the limping eventually got worse and Ernie became tired. He was struggling to walk as far as he wanted to and it was soul-destroying to see him like that, because he wanted to go on the same walks as before. He didn't want to turn around and go home early. His mind was

as active as ever, but his body was refusing to cooperate. He never lost his appetite, which perhaps, naively, is what I'd been waiting for. In fact, he had a special treat of cheese on toast on the day we decided to let him go and he devoured it in seconds! There was just something in his eye that told me he had had enough and we knew the time was right.

We'd always thought Ernie was going to be the one to break the mold. We felt certain he'd reach double figures, and we were looking forward to caring for him in his old age. Obviously it wasn't meant to be. On Dec. 3, 2014, aged just 9 years old, we said goodbye to our heroic lad.

Ernie had never raced and had been abandoned before his second birthday. Our experience showed no connection between racing and bone cancer, although some believe the genes that predispose Greyhounds to osteosarcoma are deeply ingrained in the



*Ernie doing what he loved best just a few days before he left for the Rainbow Bridge.*

gene pool.

Several studies are under way in the United Kingdom and the United States to establish the reason so many of these wonderful and gentle creatures get bone cancer. As yet these are ongoing. Until the reason why can be established, nothing can be done to stop this disease taking so many of our beloved

Greyhounds.

Despite the pain of losing three Greyhounds to this awful disease, I'll never stop adopting them. I think I probably qualify as a Greyhound addict by now, and there are still hundreds waiting in various

rescue centers across the UK, U.S., and around the world. So if you're in a position to take in a new pet, please consider a Greyhound. As long as you don't mind sharing your space on the couch, you'll have a very loyal, genuine, incredibly laid-back, and loving companion.

Ernie may not have been able to spend one last Christmas with us, but in his honor and

to help our other Greyhound Lily to move on, we adopted two, 5-year-old Whippet brothers the week before Christmas. They had been patiently waiting in kennels for nearly two years. So Ernie's legacy lives on and he'll never be forgotten. ■

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*About the author: Dedicated to Ringo (05/31/2000 - 02/10/2007), Mou-Mou (07/01/2003 - 02/07/2012), and Ernie (05/31/2005 - 12/03/2014). Sian Greenock originally from the UK, currently lives in France with her husband, Owen, and three rescue dogs: 6-year-old Irish Greyhound Lily and 6-year-old Whippet brothers Eric and Jimmy. Sian and Owen first began adopting Greyhounds in 2000 and have had the privilege of sharing their home with many sighthounds over the past 15 years. Aside from Greyhound adoption and voluntary work, Sian also enjoys horse riding, cooking, and gardening.*

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[www.solvanggreyhoundfest.org](http://www.solvanggreyhoundfest.org)

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[gig@nittanygreys.org](mailto:gig@nittanygreys.org)

814-933-6981

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[www.greyhoundgang.org](http://www.greyhoundgang.org)

[Claudia@greyhoundgang.org](mailto:Claudia@greyhoundgang.org)

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*Nigel, adopted by Ellen Wood and family through Fast Friends Greyhound Adoption.*

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*(Left to right) Therapy Greyhounds Tumbleweed and Penske with Ben, a child life specialist at a pediatric hospital, and owner Teresa Claiborne.*



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