

## SOCIALISATION (AND HABITUATION): WHAT, WHY AND HOW?

It is now accepted that many influences affect the temperament of an adult dog, this includes genetics, the whelping environment and the dam's experience in the last trimester of pregnancy. We also know that there are sensitive periods for puppies that help shape their future ability to develop into a well-adjusted adult dog.

So, what does socialisation and habituation mean and how can they help your greyhound perform and then adjust to life as a retired pet or companion?

- We know that confident, bold dogs are more successful than shy, timid dogs. Many scientific studies have tested this theory and have found a link between confidence, trainability and performance
- Although genetics are important; most commonly, what a dog will become frightened of depends on its **earlier experience**.
- This is because the more a dog is familiar with, the less it has to be frightened of. The acceptance of things that are 'normal' will depend on what the dog has encountered in the **early stages of its life**.
- Exposing the pup to different environments is commonly called **Socialisation** and **Habituation**.

## IDEAS FOR SOCIALISATION

Identify everything this pup will need to cope with as an adult, whether as a pet or a racing dog and ensure that they are familiar with each environment or situation. Include:



Allow the dog to encounter all of these between 6–14 weeks of age and ensure your greyhound associates them with positive things, like food, attention or play. It is important that you keep doing this after 14 weeks of age until pre-training, but at the early stage the pup will be more likely to want to explore whilst showing curiosity and acceptance.

- ✓ Meeting many different people (of different ages) in a positive way
- ✓ Experiencing different environments once they are vaccinated – start with quiet environments and build up to more challenging ones as the pup remains confident
- ✓ Exposing them to many different sounds (there are CDs available to do this: e.g. police sirens, birdsong, music, roller doors, ringtones, banging pots and pans, doorbells, intercoms)
- ✓ Other breeds of well socialised and mannered dogs
- ✓ Other animals (cats, livestock)
- ✓ Wearing a collar
- ✓ Walking on a leash
- ✓ Wearing a coat
- ✓ Car travel
- ✓ Cages/kennels
- ✓ Indoor environments
- ✓ Stairs
- ✓ Different surfaces
- ✓ (concrete, carpet, tarps, lino, tiles, rubber etc)

## SOUNDS & OBJECTS

For a pup to learn to be interested in chasing a lure visual and noise stimuli, they can't be afraid of it. In young pups start with toys that are not too loud but build this up over time. Allow them to get used to the indoor environment and hear music, television and even vacuum cleaners. This will also help them settle in to a post-racing pet home. Handle the pup every day, practice running your hands over their body whilst they stand quietly.

Look in their ears and mouths, handle their feet. Make this a pleasant experience by initially keeping it brief and being gentle and encouraging. Reward them with food, praise and a chase game. Take the fear out of these strange sounds. Let them explore strange objects left in their yard – anything from a straw bale to a coloured beach ball will add to their experience – be inventive!

## PEOPLE

Inconsistent and very short interactions with your greyhound puppy will not adequately prepare them for a racing career. Greyhounds need to be confident when being handled by many different types of people, including different men, women and children. Whenever you have visitors, encourage them to play and pet the pups. Exposure to children (under supervision) is important.



## TRAVEL

Gradually, introduce pups as they get older to the idea of being in a vehicle or trailer. You may start by simply feeding them in the back of a stationary trailer. Another day you could drive them up the driveway and back and increase the duration of trips over time.

## OTHER DOGS AND PETS

Aggression in dogs does not improve their running speed. Aggression is detrimental to the dogs' career, retirement options and general welfare. Aggression can occur as a response to fear and anxiety. So, in the first 3 months of a pup's life introduce it to other dogs and puppies you can trust to 'play nice' and always under close supervision. Ensure that it meets other breeds of dogs – not just greyhounds. Allow it to meet other greyhounds outside of its own litter too.

## PLACES

Until your pups are fully vaccinated moving off-site presents a risk. However, after the vaccine course is complete any chance of taking the pups to visit places with different smells, sights and sounds will benefit their future behaviour.

**With all these techniques remember to start small and build up. New objects should be introduced from a distance, car trips should be short and new sounds should start quiet. Don't try to force a pup as you risk building negative associations. These negative associations may in turn make your greyhound fearful and anxious.**

## REQUIREMENTS FOR GREYHOUND PUPPIES

LIFECYCLE CATEGORY	EXERCISE	ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT	SOCIALISATION AND HABITUATION
<b>Pups 0 – 3 weeks</b>	Allow for normal movement within the whelping box and dam's pen area.	Kept with dam and littermates.	Handle pups gently daily up to day 7 for several minutes, for example, while weighing pups. Provide proximity to routine environmental sounds. Play a noise simulation CD. Remain with dam and littermates unless under veterinary advice.
<b>Pups 3 – 12 weeks</b>	Allow for normal movement and play in dam's pen. Provide play and chase games with humans and other pups from 5 weeks. From 8 weeks provide a minimum of 30 minutes of run/play daily with human interaction.	You must provide a variety of different surfaces in the enclosure for exploration e.g. artificial grass, soft bedding, newspaper, hard floor, sand box. Introduce a variety of toys and squawkers and rotate weekly. If your pups are not exposed to routine noises, you can introduce noise simulation CDs.	You must provide a minimum of 30 minutes human interaction per litter daily. Introduce to unusual people at least once per week. Introduce to greyhound pups from another (on-site or vaccinated) litter. Introduce to other breed/s of dog (must be vaccinated, preferably small breed). Introduce wearing collar and lead
<b>12 weeks to education (after final pup vaccination)</b>	You have to give your greyhounds a minimum of 30 minutes exercise twice daily, with at least 2 hours between each session. Greyhounds housed in kennels less than 6 m <sup>2</sup> must be given at least a third opportunity to leave the kennel to toilet. If housed in a large yard, one session must be provided outside of the primary home yard or involve interaction with a human.  These may include: - off-leash run/play in secure area - on-lead walking - racing education and training If greyhound(s) are housed alone, exercise sessions must occur with other greyhounds.	Introduce food-dispensing toys to encourage foraging (e.g. treat balls, frozen food, raw bones, Kong toys). Provide several times throughout the week.  Provide a selection of toys and rotate weekly (e.g. rope toys, squeaky toys, chew toys, rubber toys).  You need to include daily chase games at least until 1 year of age and include exposure to a squawker and synthetic lure.  You can have your greyhounds in pair or group housing unless there is a compelling reason not to.	You must provide a minimum of 30 minutes human handling/ interaction daily in addition to daily feeding and cleaning routines.  Provide a selection of the activities listed below, at least twice weekly. -Practice walking on a lead. -Continue exposure to different people and animals. You must introduce: - vehicle and trailer and short trips -starting box -race track -pre-race kennels

## REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT GREYHOUND

LIFECYCLE CATEGORY	EXERCISE REQUIREMENT	ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT REQUIREMENT	SOCIALISATION AND HABITUATION REQUIREMENT
<b>Racing greyhounds Stud dogs</b>  <b>Dry brood bitches</b>  <b>Pregnant females (1 – 7 weeks gestation)</b>	<p>Minimum 30 minutes exercise twice daily with at least 2 hours between each session.</p> <p>Greyhounds housed in kennels less than 6 m<sup>2</sup> must be given at least a third opportunity to leave the kennel to toilet.</p> <p>If housed in a large yard, one session must be provided outside of the primary home yard or involve interaction with a human.</p> <p>May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- off-leash run/play in secure area</li> <li>- on-lead walking</li> <li>- racing education and training</li> </ul> <p>If greyhound(s) are housed alone exercise sessions must occur with other greyhounds.</p>	<p>Provide food-dispensing toys to encourage foraging (e.g. treat balls, frozen food, raw bones, Kong toys). Provide several times throughout the week.</p> <p>Pair or group housing unless there is a compelling reason not to.</p>	<p>Must consist of a minimum of 30 minutes human handling/ interaction daily outside of daily feeding and cleaning routines.</p>
<b>Pregnant (7+ weeks gestation) and lactating females</b>	<p>Must provide gentle exercise for a minimum 20 minutes twice daily in an area containing natural daylight</p> <p>May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on-lead exercise or</li> <li>- off-leash in a secure fenced area being directly monitored/supervised</li> </ul> <p>At least one exercise session should be in the company of another greyhound.</p> <p>Exercise modifications must be under the direction of a veterinary practitioner.</p>	<p>Provide food-dispensing toys to encourage foraging (e.g. treat balls, frozen food, raw bones, Kong toys). Provide several times throughout the week.</p>	<p>Must consist of a minimum of 30 minutes human handling/ interaction daily outside of daily feeding and cleaning routines.</p>
<b>Dogs/puppies – injured, ill, or recovering from ailment</b>	<p>Under guidance of veterinary practitioner</p>	<p>Under guidance of veterinary practitioner</p>	<p>Must consist of a minimum of 30 minutes human handling/ interaction daily outside of daily feeding and cleaning routines.</p>