

Celebrating Greyhounds

Fall 2015 Online Magazine

A Barn Hunt!

ALSO INSIDE:

First Impressions

Facing Storm Phobia

Say Cheese!



Celebrating Greyhounds

Fall 2015
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By Mary Renck Jalongo



Shasta (Hustle And Win), adopted by Steve McCullough, of Castle Rock, Colorado through Colorado Greyhound Adoption.

From the Editor: *The Right Fit*

Being a volunteer with a Greyhound adoption group can be hard work, but this summer has been especially hard for me. While we are lucky enough to have a kennel at our president's house, which cuts down on boarding bills and allows us to take in more dogs, it seems we are always at capacity. So when an adoption goes bad and a Greyhound bounces back to us, it can exacerbate an already difficult situation.

Twice this summer I got the call that one of my former fosters was returning through no fault of his/her own. Changes in living situations had made the adopters unable to care for the dogs anymore. The kennel was full; could I take her back? I generally only accept one foster at a time, and in each instance, I already had a foster in the house. But both times, I agreed. Just as my group remains responsible for the hounds it adopts out, I feel a sense of responsibility to my fosters.

It's heartbreaking to see a Greyhound return, especially multiple times. A change in his/her living situation can be stressful, which is why I try to take my own fosters back when I can. I hope that by bringing them back to an environment that is familiar to them, I can minimize their stress and help them adapt to yet another future adoption.

What's even harder, though, is witnessing some of the returns. It's maddening to see a Greyhound returned by an owner who walks away without remorse, not even stopping to pat the dog on the head or say goodbye. As infuriating as that can be to watch, it's easy to remind myself that the Greyhound is better off, as we can now work at finding it a better home.

What's even harder is watching a loving owner return a dog because life's changes — such as losing a house, a serious health issue, or even death — have made the situation impossible. Watching

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an owner shed tears while handing over the Greyhound they love is heartbreaking, but I applaud the owners who know his/her limits and do what's in the best interest of the Greyhound, even if its painful to do.

Lately, I've been trying to emphasize to new adopters that placing Greyhounds is not an exact science. The dog that we think will be OK as an only dog might not be. The hound we think loves kids might decide living with three of them is a bit too much. But luckily, in the Greyhound community, there are many, many people with years of experience placing dogs in the right homes. Their intuition is strong and their methods are good.



Hank, adopted by Becky Olstad, of Denver, Colorado, through Colorado Greyhound Adoption.

you adopted again, what steps did you take to make sure it was the right dog?

Email your thoughts, comments, and stories to me at editor@adopt-a-greyhound.org. Your stories may help someone else make the right match and find the right fit.

Stacy

Celebrating Greyhounds

Magazine is designed to serve the adoption community so we can help each other. To that end, I'd like to hear your thoughts. What does your group do to reduce the number of bounces? How do you handle returns? Do you offer training or other support as a preventative measure? As an adopter, have you ever had to return a Greyhound yourself? Why did you make the decision? If

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

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Greyhound Bytes:

News you can sink your teeth into

Greyhounds Galore in Idaho

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — Greyhound Pets of America-Greater Northwest held its annual Greyhound Picnic on Saturday, Sept. 5. About 30 Greyhounds and their humans attended the event, which also included a live and silent auction, vendor tables, and lighthearted contests for longest tail, baldest butt, thickest thighs, and more. Read more at the [CDA Press](#).

National Pet Memorial Day

DENVER, Colorado — In recognition of the pets we have lost, Sunday, Sept. 13, is National Pet Memorial Day, a day to remember and celebrate the lives of our pets. Morris Animal Foundation makes it easy to honor your pet,

or the companion animal of a family or friend, through its [memorial card program](#). According to Morris Animal Foundation, our capacity as human beings to love correlates to our capacity to grieve. Because of how we come to love our pets, we experience profound loss when one of them becomes ill or dies. Everyone mourns in their own way, and there is no timeline or formula for processing loss. However, there are some tools we can use to help ourselves, and those we care for, during the grieving process:

- Time: No one grieves on a prescribed timeline. Everyone is different and some losses take longer than others to move through. Be gentle with yourself and honor the time it takes to heal.



Able, adopted by Vivian Diaz.

Greyhound Bytes

- **Story:** Share the story of your loss with those you care about and who care about you, but also share your joyful memories.
- **Connect:** Find and make use of your support system. Understand that not everyone knows how to support someone in grief.
- **Retreat:** While connections are helpful, also recognize there will be times you need to retreat and recharge. Grieving drains your energy and you may need more quiet time to recharge than you normally take.
- **Listen:** Pay attention to your self-talk. If your emotions are spiraling out of control, you may need additional support.
- **Support:** If you know someone who is grieving the loss of a pet, the best thing you can do is be a good companion. You can't fix it for them, but you can help them heal by being there for them. Let them

know you are thinking about them.

- **Memorials:** Memorials are a beautiful way to honor the memory of a beloved pet. A memorial card also is a heartfelt way to reach out to a friend or family member who has lost a pet.

Mobile Greyhound Park Scene of New Movie

MOBILE, Alabama — *"Here Comes Rusty"* is the story of a dog track owner about to lose his business who makes a bet with co-star Fred Willard to save it. Bruce Hampton plays the track's owner. Director Tyler Russell said the comedy will be full of heart and southern charm, as well as a few Greyhounds. Read more at WKRG.com.

Australia's Animal Cruelty Laws Target Greyhound Industry

VICTORIA, Australia — Tougher punishments will be meted out to animal abusers, including Greyhound trainers using live animals as bait in training, under new laws to be introduced by the Andrews government. Earlier this year the sport was plunged into crisis with revelations live animals were being used as lures during Greyhound training. As a response the government will increase penalties for cruelty and aggravated cruelty and give courts extra powers to ban people from being in charge of animals. Read more at the [The Age](#).

Radical Dog Food Fruitful

NORTH OTAGO, New Zealand — The Newlands family, of North Otago, New Zealand, has gone to the dogs with its latest

Greyhound Bytes

business enterprise, a line of dog biscuits under the brand name Radical Dog. The biscuits contain Montmorency tart cherries and tart cherry juice concentrate. One Greyhound trainer, who trains 90 dogs and has more than 200 dogs at his property, trialed the biscuits on a few dogs. He was interested to see how they worked with older race dogs as they got stiff with age and racing. He had particularly good results with one older dog, who was very arthritic. The dog “loosened up a lot” and won some more races. Read more at the [Otago Daily Times](#).

Gulf Greyhound Park to Close

LA MARQUE, Texas — Recognizing that it is offering a pastime that is in decline, the last dog track in Texas, Gulf Greyhound Park in La Marque, will close its doors at the end of the year. No, Texas hasn't declared dog racing illegal. No, there hasn't been a crackdown

on wagering in a conservative state. There just aren't enough fans in the stands — and certainly not enough at the betting window. Come New Year's Day, the races will stop, the park announced in late August. Read more at the [Fort Worth Star-Telegram](#).



As a GreySave member and Therapy Team, Maddy and Carole Perez enjoy the Bakersfield, California, GreySave Meet & Greet once a month (pictured). Registered with PetPartners/Paws4Healing in Porterville, California, they visit the local hospital, a rehab facility and a sheltered workshop, as well as perform demonstrations for multiple clubs and organizations.

Greyhound Therapy Dog Spreads Smiles

STATEN ISLAND, New York — Watching Misty Rose walk the halls of Staten Island University Hospital's Prince's Bay campus, you would think she's a local celebrity — and she is, in her own way. Misty is an 11-year-old Greyhound, and she and her owner, Ira Kupferberg, have been walking the halls of hospitals and rehabilitation centers for years, bringing happiness to the patients they see. Read the full story at [SILive.com](#).

Dubuque Dog Wagering Down, Industry Still Optimistic

DUBUQUE, Iowa — Wagering is down sharply at Dubuque's Greyhound track compared with last year, but there's disagreement whether that's a bad sign for Iowa's dwindling dog racing industry. Under a \$92 million agreement with the Greyhound

Greyhound Bytes

industry approved by the Iowa Legislature in 2014, Horseshoe Casino in Council Bluffs is permitted to close its money-losing Bluffs Run dog track on January 1, 2016 while Mystique Casino in Dubuque was allowed to get out of dog racing late last year. But the Iowa Greyhound Association, an industry group, is keeping the Dubuque track open with a slimmed-down racing schedule. Between May and July, the track now known as Iowa Greyhound Park reported wagering of \$642,909 on live dog races, which is down 25 percent compared with the same period last year, according to the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission. Read more at

[*The Des Moines Register*](#).

Yorkshire Greyhound Day Supports Greyhounds

SHEFFIELD, United Kingdom — Friday, Aug. 14, marked the third annual Yorkshire Greyhound Day, an event created by Sheffield's

Owlerton Stadium to raise awareness of these loving canine companions. Away from the racing excitement at Owlerton, the stadium is also committed to making sure that Greyhounds have a happy life once their racing days are over. They therefore support the Sheffield branch of the Retired Greyhound Trust, which is based at Rotherham Gate Lodge in Wortley, Sheffield. Read more and watch a video at [*The Star*](#).

First Greyhound Assistance Dog Trained in Queensland

QUEENSLAND, Australia — Meet Minnie — not your average Greyhound. While many of Minnie's peers are racing around a track, the two-year-old pup has been trained for something entirely different. She is Queensland's first-ever rescued Greyhound to be trained as an assistance dog, and only the second in Australia. Read the full story at the [*Sunshine Coast Daily*](#).

South Africans Use Greyhounds to Hunt

SOUTH AFRICA — Man's best friend is being used to help South Africans hunt small game, even though it's illegal. In Soweto, dog owners take their Greyhounds and dogs to nearby fields (or velds) to hunt rabbits, small antelope, and other small game during a traditional hunt. This form of dog hunting has been around for generations, according to the European Pressphoto Agency. On weekends, at sunrise, hunters and sometimes up to 20 dogs pile into a local taxi to go to the hunting grounds to the west of Johannesburg. The dogs work together to corral the game and the hunt usually lasts until midday. Though hunting in South Africa has stirred up some controversy, especially related to poaching, many families rely on this form of dog hunting for food. Anti-poaching lobbyists don't support this type of

Greyhound Bytes

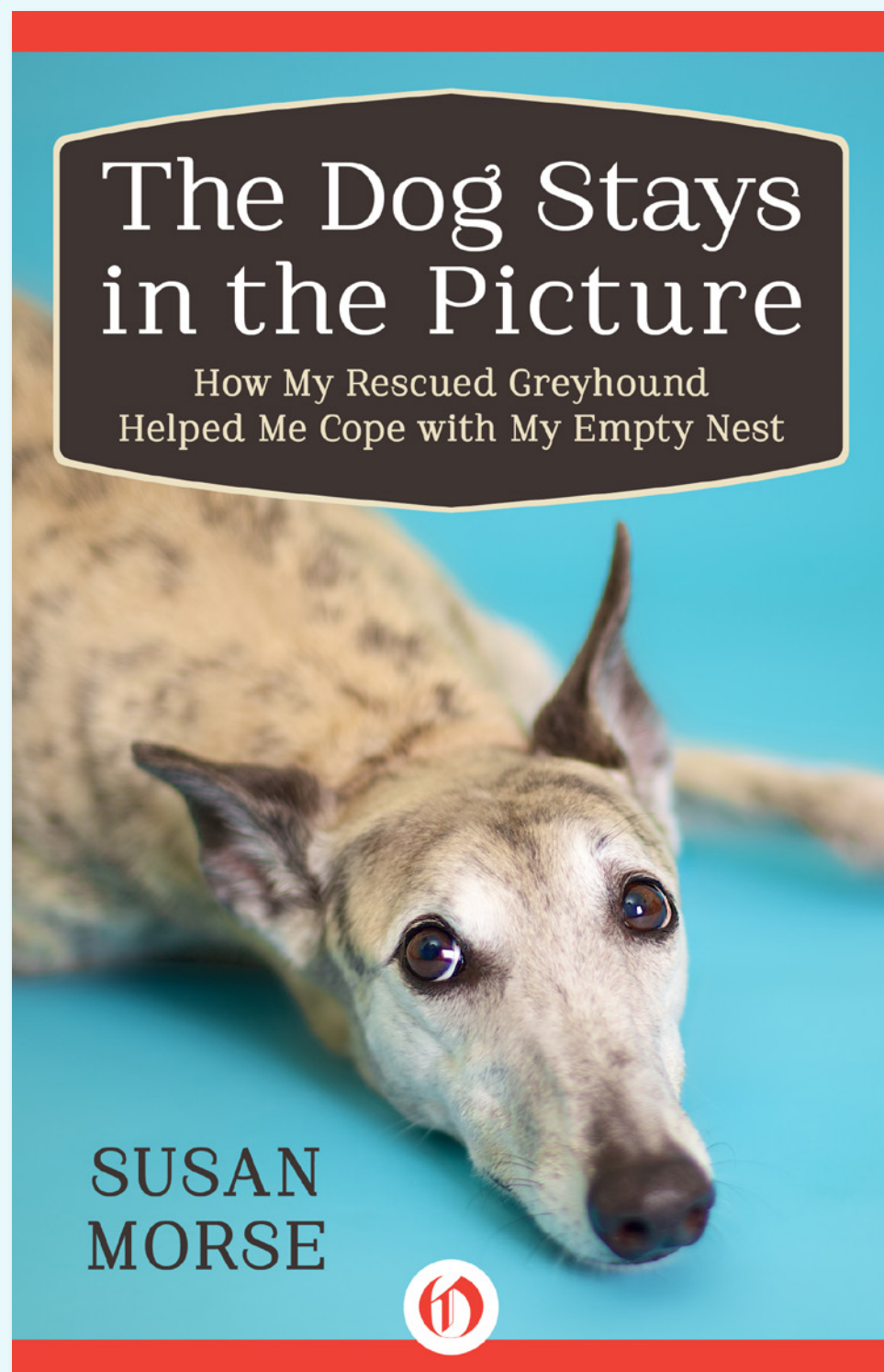
hunting, even though African tribes from the area have had dogs and used them in hunting since they first settled on the land. See the photo essay on [Mashable](#).

Annie's 15th Birthday Makes Headlines

PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania — For her 15th birthday, 22 people came to pay homage to Annie, who regally presided over the party at her Ross home. She wore her silver tiara, and guests gave her treats and toys. There were cupcakes decorated with edible pictures of Greyhounds, for Annie is a Greyhound — and a special one, at that. Annie is a survivor, in more ways than one. Read more about Annie at the [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#).



Pirate, Romeo, and Simon adopted by Donna Wares, of Seal Beach, California, through GreySave.



A Memoir Worth Reading

While a Greyhound isn't the focus of the book, it is still a worthwhile read about one woman's journey through life.

by Joanne Ardizzone

The Dog Stays in the Picture

Author Susan Morse

Publisher: **Open Road Media** (September 29, 2014)

Paperback: 264 pages

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-1497643932

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 8 inches

To be fair to our readers, I feel the need to note that although a beautiful Greyhound graces its cover, *The Dog Stays in the Picture* is not a Greyhound-specific book. Susan Morse's second memoir, *The Dog Stays in the Picture*, is in fact an extremely funny, frantic, and emotional

look at growing up and letting go.

I had the pleasure of meeting Morse at this year's Kanab Greyhound Gathering, where she was among event speakers. Morse shared with the group how she came to be a Greyhound adopter and how incredibly special she believes retired racing

Greyhounds are. Lilly, Morse's only hound, died last summer, but her love for the breed was evident throughout the weekend.

During her talk, Morse read an excerpt from her book. I would have happily listened to Susan reading her entire book. I truly enjoyed the way the characters came to life through her emotions, inflections, and the different voices she gave to each character, including her beautiful Lilly.

I believe this book is a good read for all animal lovers, but especially anyone dealing with an empty nest or life issues where a good laugh and/or cry is in order.

The Dog Stays in the Picture explores the ups and downs of Morse's life as she and her family transition from one stage to the next. This is something I could relate to, even without an empty nest.

As I read Morse's book, I found myself reflecting on my own life. How my canines, including five hounds, have been there for

me through good times and bad, how their very presence has changed my life.

Morse's writings share with the reader how intuitive and amazing retired racing Greyhounds truly are. They are sensitive, loving creatures who can see into your soul. *The Dog Stays in the Picture* is a heartfelt story that shows how deep the love and bond between animals and humans can become, even if we are too blinded by daily life to see that bond. ■

About the author: Joanne Ardizzone has been involved with Greyhound rescue over a decade. When she's not working with various breed rescues and animal charities, she's taking lots of photos of Greyhounds. In November 2013 she joined the Celebrating Greyhounds team as a copy editor. In 2012, she was invited to join the Solvang Greyhound Fest committee and gladly accepted. Joanne and her husband, Duke, reside in Las Vegas, Nevada, with their Greyhound mix Lacey and retired racing Greyhounds Honey and Worthy.



Smoke (What's Smokin) was adopted by Nancy Bowden, of Warwick, New York, through Greyhound Friends of New Jersey, where he was a participant in GFNJ's award-winning prison program. Photo by Amy Roth.

Ask the Expert: How to Avoid a Fatal Attraction

Is your Greyhound a social butterfly, or does he meet new hounds with a reserved, "Butt... I don't even nose you yet!"

By Deb Levasseur, CTB (Certified Trainer & Canine Behavior Consultant)

Fortunately for the human race, we don't greet one another in the same manner that dogs do. Can you imagine walking up to greet someone and having them touch your nose with theirs, and then immediately running behind you to sniff each other's derriere? We would be mortified and perhaps never try to socialize again; but for dogs, this is perfectly natural behavior. In this article, we will examine three short videos of dog greetings, discuss pertinent observations, and review some take-home messages to help you better socialize your dog.

Please view the following 20-second video and see what you can gather from the meeting before continuing your reading. You may need to view the clip several times to observe the dogs' body language as there is a lot to examine.



Video 1 Observations

1. All of the dogs are on tight leashes, which greatly increases the tension.
2. There are too many dogs greeting at one time, which can be very overwhelming for many dogs. In this video, we can see that the fawn Greyhound is stressed by meeting two other hounds at once, and being on a leash puts him in an even more uncomfortable position. He shows his stress with his stiff body, uplifted tail, head turn, flat ears, and lip licks. He even tries to leave, but is pulled back and then gives a tongue flick as his stress escalates. The interaction then moves to a one-on-one greeting with the dark brindle and they proceed with the proper hind-sniffing ritual.
3. The owners are engaged in their own conversations and their attention is not fully on their dogs.

Take-Home Lesson No. 1

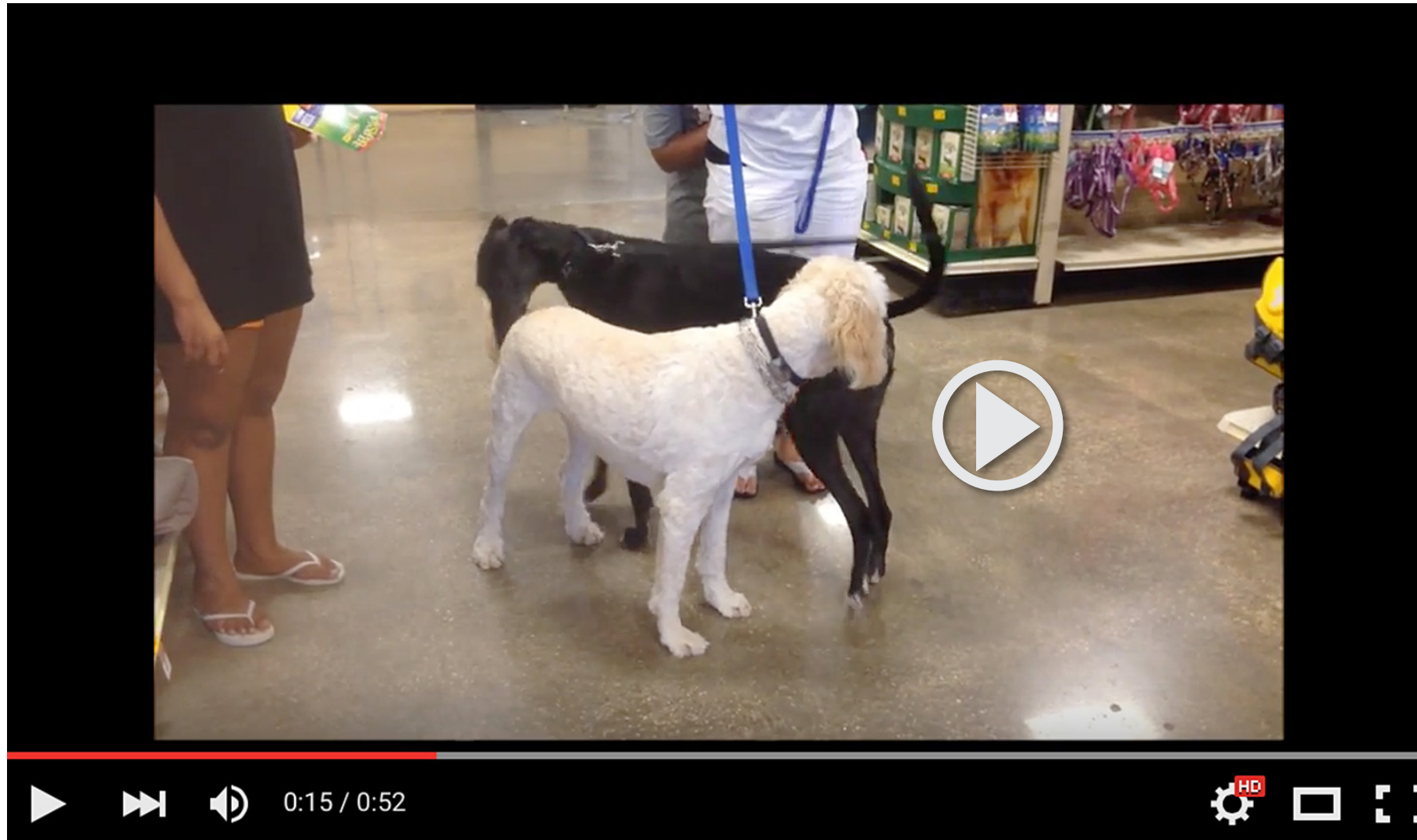
It is not natural for dogs to meet while

being attached to leashes, but sometimes it is necessary, particularly for Greyhounds. Leashed dogs realize that they do not have the option to remove themselves from the situation, which can create a great deal of stress and may even lead to leash aggression. We should give our dogs enough slack in their leashes so they can move freely without tension and so that the lead does not restrict their ability to offer natural body posturing. The leash should only be used as a back-up safety device, and the dog should barely know it is there.

It is also essential to remember that our Greyhounds will pick up on even the least bit of anxiety from us. Tightening up the leash places tension on their neck or chest, which can cause the dog to become apprehensive. Even our rigid or stiff bodies, our breathing, and our voice will let the dog know how we are feeling, and he will react accordingly. One aspect we love about our Greyhounds is how in tune they are to us, but in this case it can be a hindrance.

It is very challenging to fool dogs as they are body language experts, so we must practice and always be aware of the message we are sending them. The “Jolly Routine,” founded by Bill Campbell in the 1980s and used by many dog trainers such as Dr. Ian Dunbar, eliminates the anxiety and stiffness that fuels reactive dogs. It can work wonders here! Silly, upbeat, rhythmic voices relax the dogs (and us) and greetings progress so much better. It’s not important what we say, but rather how we say it. We can simply recite a nursery rhyme as rhythm has a calming effect. You can even incorporate the rhythm in your body movements. After all, dancing always makes us feel better!

Please view the 14-second video on the next page and see what you can gather from the meeting before continuing your reading. You may need to view the clip several times to observe the dogs’ body language as there is a lot to examine.



Video 2 Observations

1. The Greyhound starts out by initializing the greeting with rather stiff, uncomfortable eye contact. The Greyhound moves in a little too quickly on the white dog, but he does go to

the hind area, which is good. The white dog tastes the Greyhound's scent and analyzes it. Both dogs are tense at this time and they do not know what to make of each other. The greeting could go either way at this point.

2. They circle a bit and the Greyhound moves into the white dog's side, which causes the white dog to be startled. Notice the left-handed tail wag at this point. (*National Geographic* has written a wonderful article about right- and left-handed tail wags that I highly recommend reading.)
3. The Greyhound is feeling quite bold and holds herself high and taut. In both dogs, note the tail wags (and type of tail wag).
4. The Greyhound then goes to the face of the white dog, which causes him to turn away and ultimately walk away.
5. The white dog clearly wants to end the greeting, but the Greyhound puts his head over the white dog's shoulders in a show of assertiveness, which causes the white dog to move away. This is where the video ends.

Take-Home Lesson No. 2

The sort of tail wagging presented by both dogs throughout this video is not relaxed or happy. I often hear owners say their dog is happy because his/her tail is wagging, although

this behavior means only that the dog is anticipating something, which could be good or bad. Tail wagging can mean your dog could be getting ready to pounce on prey or bite someone. Usually a happy wag is fast, very loose, and the entire back ends moves with the tail. When our dog is being bullied or stressed out by another dog, we need to step up and get him out of that situation. That is what a benevolent leader does.

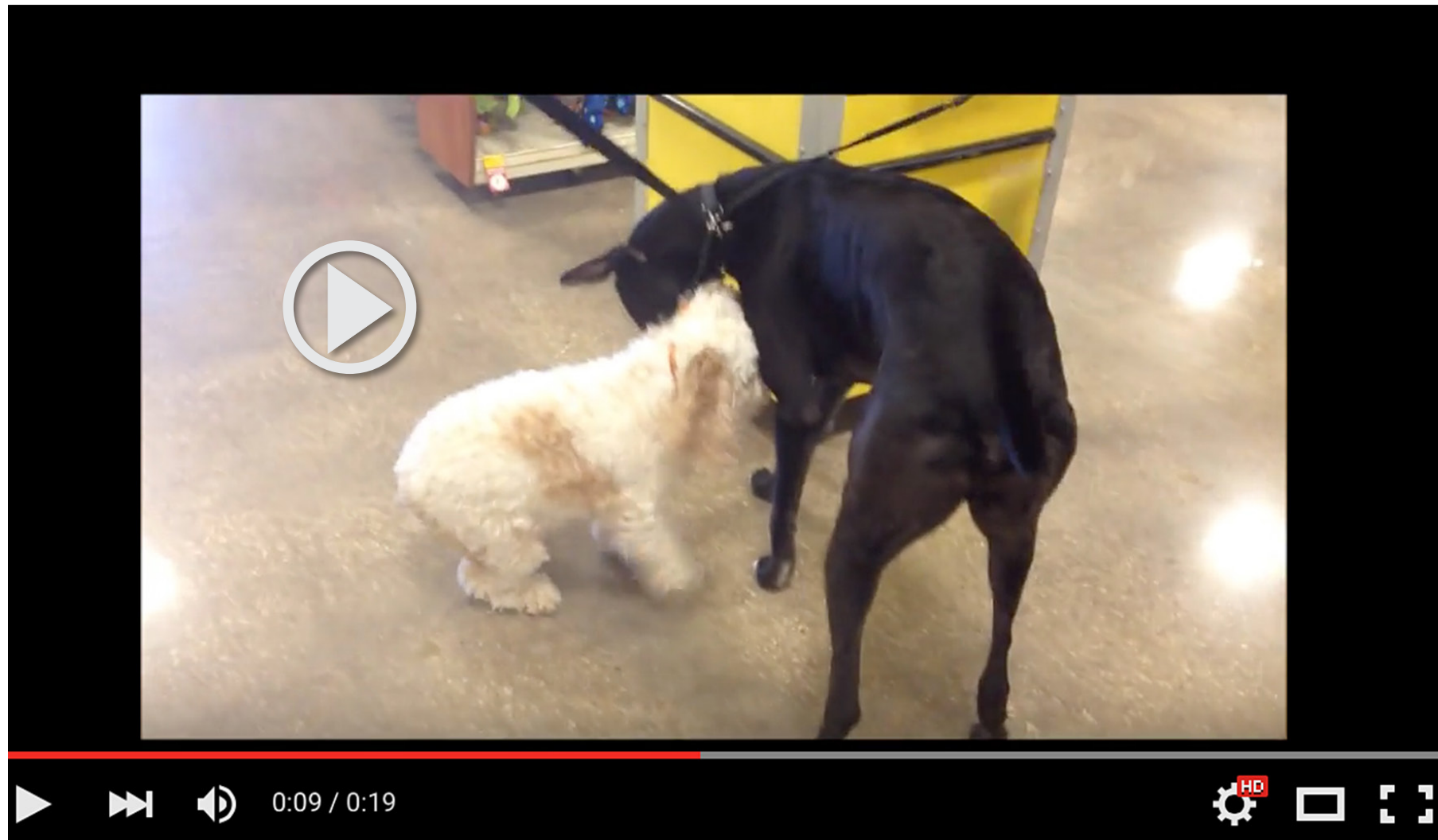
We also need to remember to reinforce the behavior we want repeated by our dogs. My No. 1 go-to rule in dog training is, “Behavior that is reinforced (whether good or bad) is likely to be repeated.” If you see your dog greeting another dog nicely with a hind-end sniff and circle around and then walks off, immediately offer up a, “GOOD BOY! NICE JOB!” and a possible food treat. Keep in mind that food can be harder to use if you are working directly with another dog and a secondary reinforcer (such as praise) may be

better in that case. If you are working one-on-one off to the side to distract or relax your dog, food reinforcers work better. Taking control of the situation will also give our dogs the confidence they need that they are being taken care of, rather than them feeling that they have to deal with these issues and make decisions on their own. This white dog was easy-going and dealt with the situation well, but another dog may not have done the same. This means that just because your dog was fine greeting a particular canine does not mean he will be fine with every dog. We should not make broad assumptions, and we should be proactive in controlling all canine interactions.

Please view the 14-second video on the next page and see what you can gather from the meeting before continuing your reading. You may need to view the clip several times to observe the dogs’ body language as there is a lot to examine.



Abby, adopted by Lori Willick, is a registered therapy dog through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. She is pictured outside of the Halifax Medical Center of Port Orange, Florida, where she just finished “working.”



Video 3 Observations

1. The black Greyhound initiates the meeting with the small dog. The first aspect you will notice in this video is the presence of tangled leashes. Also note that the

small dog is on a retractable leash. Retractable leashes are dangerous and are not appropriate for dogs under any circumstance. The jumble of leashes then puts the small dog in panic mode, which

sparked the Greyhound's prey drive.

2. The Greyhound is asserting himself on the little dog, who becomes frightened and is unable to remove herself from the intimidating greeting. This is very scary for the little dog at this point. Think of what may be running through her mind, and for good reason. She cannot run away, and she is outsized and out-muscled in a potential attack.
3. The Greyhound's behavior is somewhat intense, and anything could have happened. As owners, we need to be ready to interrupt when greetings goes south like this one unfortunately did.

Take-Home Lesson No. 3

We should always be thinking of the tendency towards predatory drift when introducing small and large dogs, especially breeds with a higher prey drive, like Greyhounds. With predatory drift, dogs who normally get along well with small dogs or

cats have their prey mode triggered, which causes them to chase, attack, and even kill another animal. It is like a switch goes off in their head and their primal instincts take over for a short time. Certain triggers that can set this off are an injured animal, high-pitched yelping, sudden movements such as running or jumping, being in an outside environment, an animal being carried above your dog's head, or an animal showing fear or panic. Also, when one dog's predatory drift is set off, it can trigger other dogs to join in, which is one of several reasons why dog parks can be dangerous. This can also occur inside your home with your own dog pack.

We also need to keep in mind the reaction time of dogs compared to humans. By the time we process what has happened, the incident is usually over. We should not fool ourselves into thinking that we can stop a dangerous interaction just by standing nearby.

We should instead strive to set our dogs up for success by using proper management techniques instead of holding our breath and hoping for the best.

We can work on this in many different ways. For example, if a dog looks stiff or has a direct stare as he approaches your dog, be proactive by preventing this greeting. Also, it is vital to keep yourself and your dog in a relaxed state while meeting other dogs. Working with a good positive reinforcement dog trainer will help you learn how to identify your dog's triggers and tolerance thresholds. This will, in turn, teach you how to train your dog to be happy, relaxed, and confident when meeting other dogs. Practicing reading and analyzing canine body language is imperative for all dog owners. Dangerous interactions can and do happen in the blink of an eye. Dog body language can also be extremely subtle and developing the skill to read your dog

will take time. To aid us in our quest, I highly recommend the book *Canine Body Language – A Photographic Guide* by Brenda Aloff. The more we learn about our fascinating canine companions, the more we grow to love and adore them! ■

About the author: Deb Levasseur, CTB, is a Certified Trainer and Canine Behavior Consultant. She is the president and founder of Maritime Greyhound Adoption Program, based in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Dolce Gambino's Road to RATCH

A Greyhound's journey to a Barn Hunt Championship

By Christine Beisert

My husband, Don Beisert, and I first heard about a new dog sport, barn hunt, nearly two years ago. At the time, our Greyhound, Dolce Gambino, primarily competed in the sport of agility. We also actively visited skilled nursing centers and libraries as a certified therapy dog team. When a friend told me about barn hunt



Dolce Gambino poses with Don Beisert after earning his Barn Hunt Championship title on June 18, 2015, at the Knoxville Barn Hunt in Evensville, Tennessee, to become the first champion Greyhound in Barn Hunt history.



Watch a video of Dolce Gambino and Don Beisert at Barn Hunt in Evensville, Tennessee.

during agility class one day, I was intrigued. She described how in barn hunt, a dog and handler team hunts for rats (secured safely inside tubes) hidden throughout a fenced course consisting

of straw bales. It sounded like just a sport Dolce would thoroughly enjoy due to his high prey drive; it could even be the first organized activity with my husband as his handler.

Barn hunting was created by Robin Nuttal because she wanted her dog to be able to hunt vermin competitively, but her pet was not one of the breeds eligible for the American Kennel Club's Earthdog sport. Consequently, she invented barn hunt as a titling sport for all breeds and mixed breeds to test their working ability to hunt vermin. The only restriction is the dog must be able to fit through a straw bale tunnel roughly 18 inches wide by about 18 inches tall. To qualify, the dog must complete a climb (all four feet on a straw bale) and a tunnel, and the handler must correctly identify all rat tubes on the course within the time limit. As teams advance in classes, the complexity of the course and number of live rats increase while the tunnels get longer, darker, and more twisted. Rat health and safety are paramount in barn hunt. The live rats used in barn hunt trials always stay protected inside the ventilated plastic tubes.

Since local barn hunt classes were rare when we began training, we only practiced once or



Dolce Gambino hunts on an Open course in McKinney, Texas. Photo by John Frick, Makco Marketing Photo Events.

twice before entering our first barn hunt trial conducted by North Texas Barnhunters in McKinney, Texas. At trials, dogs begin concurrently in the Instinct and Novice classes. The Instinct test is an optional pass/fail test where handlers must correctly identify which of three PVC tubes contain a live rat, based on their dogs' indicators. Three tubes are placed on the ground in plain sight, spaced about a foot apart. One tube is empty, another contains only litter from the rat's cage, and a third tube contains a live rat with some litter. Dolce easily passed his Instinct test on the first try. He checked one tube by sniffing it, then immediately moved on to the adjacent tube, sniffed it and began nosing and pawing at the tube. He made it clear which tube contained the live rat. In barn hunt the handler needs to read the dog's signals to determine when to declare the find of the rat to the judge. Dolce signals by waving his tail and nosing, pawing,



ARCH UCDX URO1 Pike's Kink in my Tail CDX BN GN CDX-C REA SC RL2 CGC RATI RATM NW2 NDD (Kinky), owned by Janet Pike of Longs, South Carolina, became the first Greyhound to earn the Barn Hunt Master title on March 29, 2015. Photo by Janet Pike.

and/or biting the rat tube.

To earn the Novice title in barn hunt, a team must accumulate three qualifying legs in that class. In Novice, the handler must

and not mark on the straw bales. Since Dolce measures nearly 28 inches at the withers, he works a lot harder to go through the 18-inch

correctly identify the single live rat tube hidden on the course. In addition, the dog must climb and go through a straight, short tunnel built of straw bales, all within two minutes. Even at the Novice level, Dolce expertly distinguished rat tubes from

litter tubes. Don's challenge was getting Dolce to climb and tunnel

tunnel. Most dogs simply walk through the tunnel, but Dolce has to belly crawl. It took several tries for Dolce and Don to earn the Novice title. At a few different trials they did not qualify because Dolce refused to go through the tunnel and to climb, or he marked on a straw bale. Fortunately, Dolce's propensity for marking on straw was corrected fairly quickly. He learned that "watering" the straw bale meant his fun rat-hunting game immediately ended, and that his dad would promptly remove him from the ring.

Once Dolce and Don earned their Novice Barn Hunt (RATN) title, they met a new tunnel challenge in the Open class. The Open tunnel contains one turn, so it's dark and the exit is not visible from the entrance. This proved difficult since Don could no longer look at Dolce from the other end of the tunnel to encourage him to crawl through.

On an Open course, teams must identify two live rat tubes (among two litter tubes and



*Dolce Gambino is titled in both AKC and ASCA agility, where he competed before starting Barn Hunt.
Photo by Don Beisert.*

one empty tube) within two and one-half minutes. As with all classes (except Instinct), the tunnel and climb are mandatory. Dolce loved being able to find two rats on the course and, just like at the Novice level, he had no trouble ignoring the litter tubes beyond an initial sniff check. Don and Dolce went through a few trials where Dolce refused the dark tunnel. That's when we decided to practice tunneling at home. Don and I purchased straw bales from the local farm supply store and set up an Open-style tunnel on our porch. We worked with Dolce daily, providing high-value treats and plenty of praise. Soon the dark L-shaped tunnel became less and less scary. We also took barn hunt classes at our school, What A Great Dog!, in Frisco, Texas. Our practicing paid off at the next local trial. Don and Dolce earned their Open Barn Hunt (RATO) title on December 7, 2014, by qualifying three out of four times that weekend.



Dolce Gambino, pictured with Christine Beisert, sniffs a rat tube at Barn Hunt practice.

Our next challenge was the Senior class, in which teams have three and one-half minutes to locate all four rats, climb the straw bales, and complete a two- to three-turn tunnel.

Dolce absolutely loved hunting on the Senior course. In his mind, the more rats the better! Unfortunately, our tunnel challenges returned. Not only did Dolce dislike the more difficult

Senior tunnels, he realized that at barn hunt trials, rat tubes are never hidden inside the official tunnel(s), per barn hunt guidelines. We did not have enough room on our small porch to build three-turn tunnels in which to train, so once again he began refusing the dark tunnels at the trials. Thankfully one of the local schools, All Fur Fun in Addison, Texas, offered barn hunt practice. We took a few private lessons. Dolce's instructor set up the ring so Dolce would have to tunnel first, before being rewarded with rat hunting. He considered it a fair deal. After a couple lessons, Dolce happily tackled three- and even four-turn tunnels for praise, yummy treats, and rat hunting time. On March 15, 2015, Dolce earned his third and final leg for his Senior Barn Hunt (RATS) title.

Master is the highest and final class in barn hunt. It takes five qualifying legs to earn the Master Barn Hunt title. Teams are given up to four and one-half minutes to locate anywhere from one to five live rat tubes on



With Don Beisert, Dolce Gambino hunts on an Open course in McKinney, Texas, under Judge Mark Shaw. Photo by John Frick, Makco Marketing Photo Events.

the course. While the Master course will always contain eight tubes, the number of rat tubes and the number of litter tubes will vary at random. The Master level is difficult because the handler does not know how many live rat tubes are hidden on the course. It requires a great deal of teamwork for the dog and handler to succeed. Once the handler believes the dog has found all live rat tubes, he must call "Clear." If he is wrong, the team does not qualify. Master tunnels contain two to five turns.

Our tunneling practice truly paid off at the Master level. Dolce tackled dark four-turn tunnels at trials with confidence and enthusiasm, even when much smaller dogs repeatedly refused them. Don and Dolce took only seven tries to earn the five legs required for their Master title. On April 25, 2015, at a North Texas Barnhunters trial, Dolce became the second Greyhound in

barn hunt history to earn his Master Barn Hunt (RATM) title.

To earn the Barn Hunt Champion (RATCH) title, teams must accumulate an additional 10 Master class qualifying legs after attaining the Master title. Don and Dolce earned an astounding 10 Master qualifications in a row for their Barn Hunt Championship. Their first four qualifying legs came from the NOLA Barn Hunt Friends trial in Kenner, Louisiana. Their last six qualifying legs came from the Knoxville Barn Hunt trial in Evensville, Tennessee. On July 18, 2015, Dolce Gambino accumulated his 10th Master qualification to become the first Greyhound champion in barn hunt history.

We owe much of our success to our fellow barn hunting colleagues, judges, and instructors. They provided encouragement and support each step of the way. At every trial, spectators watch,



Dolce Gambino hunts on a Master course in Edmond, Oklahoma, under Judge Brandi Coyner. Photo by Linda Earley Photography.

cheer, and clap after each team finishes. Barn hunt is a labor of love. While judges are paid a nominal amount, all other positions are staffed by volunteers. Many exhibitors work together to ensure the success of each trial, taking on roles



Dolce Gambino poses after a North Texas Barnhunters trial in McKinney, Texas.

such as chief ring steward, trial secretary, rat wrangler, scribe, and course builder. Every trial takes great effort to organize, run, and clean up, but we enjoy the entire process thanks to the camaraderie of the barn hunt community.

We encourage all interested readers to get started in barn hunt by locating a local barn hunt club, fun test, or class.

Dolce (Genesis Way), is my husband's and my first and only dog. We adopted him through Greyhound Adoption League of Texas as a retired racer. It's hard to believe four years ago we were in a classroom together, learning to teach him how to sit on cue. From basic obedience class we progressed to agility, nose work, therapy, treibball, flyball, tricks, and barn hunt. Today he is officially recognized as RATCH Dolce

Gambino OA OAJ NFP NW1 THD

TDIA JS-N RS-N CGCA. Our beloved brindle boy introduced us to the world of Greyhounds, dog lovers, and dog sports. He taught us so much and I know this incredible journey with him is just starting. ■



Dolce Gambino hunts on a Master course at the Knoxville Barn Hunt in Evensville, Tennessee, under judge Sharon Webb.



Dolce Gambino, adopted by Don and Christine Beisert of Frisco, Texas, through Greyhound Adoption League of Texas. Photo by Don Beisert.

About the author: Christine Beisert lives in Frisco, Texas, with her husband Don and their cherished brindle son Dolce Gambino. For details about barn hunt, visit barnhunt.com.

Thunderstorm Phobia

If thunder and lightning scare your Greyhound, there are some things you can do to help him weather the storm.

By Jennifer Ng, DVM

If your dog trembles and shakes, or tries to hide or get away during thunderstorms, you're not alone. Thunderstorm phobia is a common problem among dogs, and Greyhounds are no exception. Some dogs show fairly mild anxiety during storms, but others have more extreme responses and get into a truly panicked state.

Emotional Management

Mild cases of storm phobia may be successfully managed with training and behavior modification. First, it is important to be aware that your reaction can have a

big impact on the dog's emotional state and response to future storms. It is best for you to stay calm and relaxed. If you act overly concerned, your Greyhound may think you are afraid of the storm, too and become even more anxious. Instead, stay calm, ignore your dog's nervous behavior, and go about your daily activities and interact normally with the dog as if nothing was happening.

Additional techniques that may help include providing background noise with a TV or radio, and closing curtains to muffle storm sounds

and make lightning less visible. Some dogs find comfort in a safe place, such as a covered crate, inside a closet, or even in a bathroom or in a bathtub. If your hound is able to cope better in a certain location, make sure they can get there during storms. Other dogs do better if they can stay near or be in contact with you.

Natural/Holistic Treatment Options

There are a number of natural or alternative treatment options that can help with storm phobia. However, many of these are not backed by scientific evidence, and responses



Some Greyhounds benefit from anti-anxiety wraps, such as the Thundershirt, during thunder storms.

can be quite variable. It can take some trial-and-error to find one that works for your dog. When dealing with milder cases of anxiety, you have time to experiment and try to find

something that helps.

Some of these natural options include pheromones that come in the form of collars (D.A.P., NutureCALM 24/7), or sprays and diffusers (D.A.P., Comfort Zone). There are also a number of herbal and homeopathic remedies as well as natural supplements.

While there are too many products to list, a few examples include Rescue Remedy, Composure,

Harmonease, NutriCalm by RxVitamins, and Anxitane. Additionally, some dogs have good results with a couple of products called Thundershirt and Anxiety Wrap which are

essentially vests that use pressure to provide a calming effect, similar to swaddling a baby.

Behavior Modification

It is also possible to use training techniques to desensitize dogs to aspects of the storm that they find scary. Desensitization and counter-conditioning (DS&CC) are technical terms for gradually getting a dog accustomed to something they are afraid of and changing their association to a more positive one. Desensitization is best done during the off-season, when actual storms won't interfere with progress.

To plan a DS&CC protocol, you need to identify an artificial simulation of parts of the storm sequence to which the dog reacts. The most commonly used stimuli are audio CDs of rain or thunderstorms. To see if the dog responds to it, play the CD at normal volume and watch the dog's body language closely.

You don't necessarily need to see a complete panic response like for a real storm — even minor signs of anxiety (ears going back, panting, trembling, looking away, yawning, licking lips) are enough to indicate the dog will benefit from work with that CD.

Once you're ready to begin the behavior modification protocol, you want to start by playing the CD at a volume that's low enough that it doesn't elicit any response from the dog. Reward the dog for happy, relaxed body language with praise and treats. You can also work on some easy obedience commands that the dog knows (like sit or down) and again reward with treats/praise. But make sure the dog is calm and happy, or even excited, to be playing along. Some well-trained dogs can be nervous and scared but still obey commands.

Very gradually increase the volume of the

rain or storm CD over a number of multiple short sessions. The goal is to go slowly enough that you never elicit an anxious response. If you see any subtle signs of anxiety in the dog's body language, you've gone too fast. With time, you should get to the point where you can play the CD at normal, or louder than normal volume, and the dog stays happy and relaxed.

Depending on the dog's response, a protocol might begin with a CD of just rain, then progress to CDs of mild storms, then stronger, more violent storms. Some dogs react to other aspects of the storm like lightning or wind, and if you get creative, you can even attempt DS&CC to other stimuli if you can figure out how to simulate it in a controlled way. For example, a strobe light can be used to simulate lightning. In the early stages of DS&CC, the strobe light can

be used at the far end of the house away from the dog, then gradually get closer as the dog becomes desensitized to the flashing light. Obviously there are also components of storms, like barometric pressure and static electricity that we can't control and desensitize to. However, most dogs react to the noise of the storm and can benefit from DS&CC to audio CDs.

Medication for Severe Cases

For the severe cases, medication to help reduce panic and anxiety may be the best option for the dog's psychological well-being. Prescription medications usually have a stronger and more consistent effect than the natural supplements and remedies. However, medication should always be used in conjunction with behavior modification to help the dog cope with storms.

There are a number of anti-anxiety

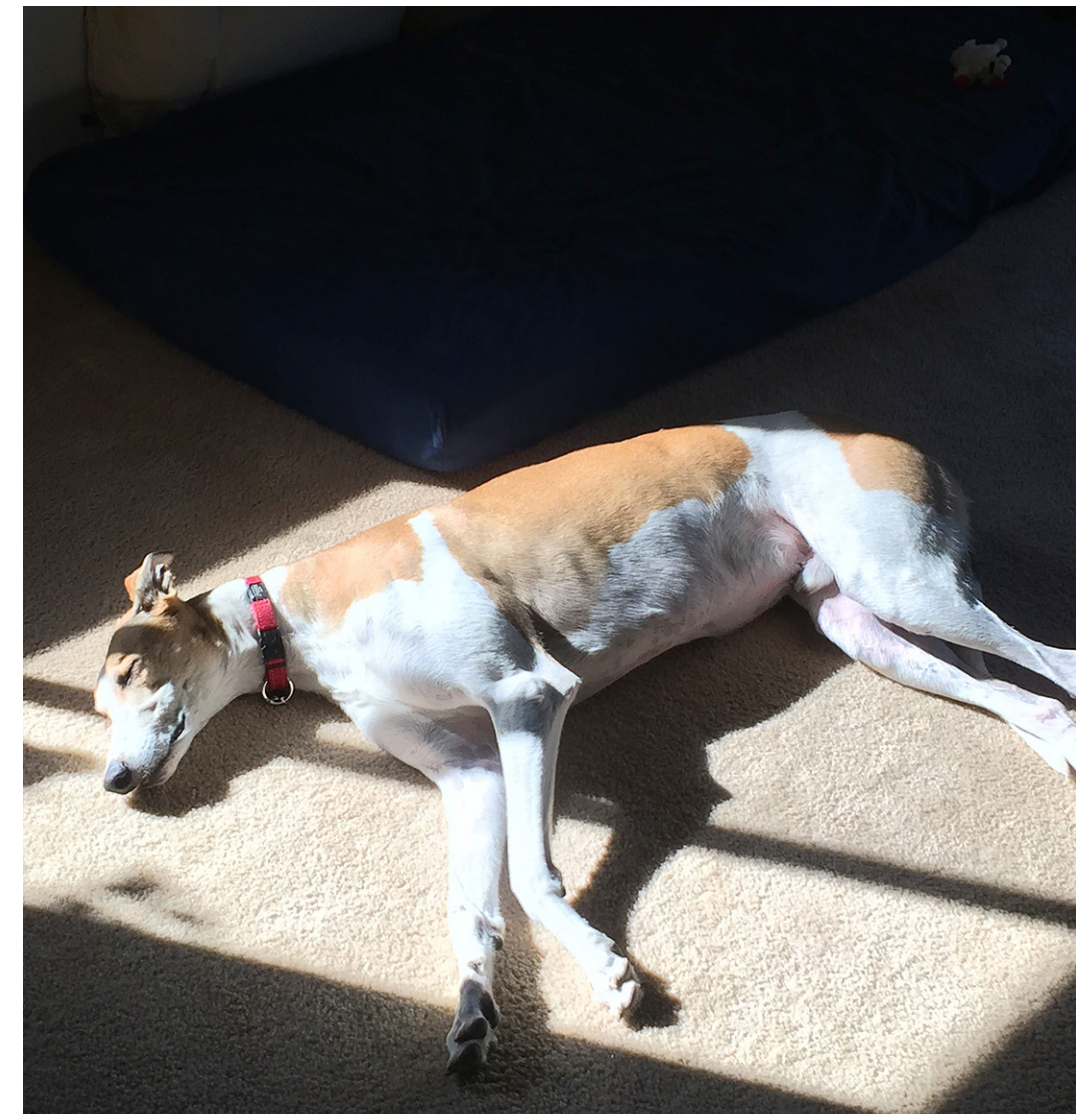
medications used in veterinary medicine. Some, like Valium or Xanax, provide immediate short-term anxiety relief and can be given as needed for storms. Others, like Prozac or Clomicalm, need to be given daily over time, but can provide a “background” anti-anxiety effect, which can be beneficial when you are not home to give one of the short-acting medications during a storm. There are also some medications newer to the veterinary field, like trazodone and clonidine, which may be helpful. With any medication, adjustments to dose or drug choice may be needed to optimize response.

One medication that may be best to avoid is acepromazine. Many vets still use it, but veterinary behaviorists no longer recommend it. Acepromazine is a sedative that does not truly provide anxiety relief and can even make dogs more sensitive to noises. While some

dogs may seem to benefit from it, there is also a risk that it may make the behavior worse. There are many better drug options other than acepromazine for treating fears and anxieties.

Thunderstorm phobia is a problem that can be treated with a combination of behavior modification and medication. If your dog has this problem, talk to your veterinarian about what your options are. Not all vets are experienced with behavioral medicine, though. So if your veterinarian does not seem very helpful, you may need to ask for a referral to a veterinary behaviorist, or at least a regular veterinarian who has a special interest in behavior. ■

About the author: Dr. Jennifer Ng is a veterinarian at the Northeast Animal Hospital in Columbia, South Carolina. She actively volunteers with Greyhound Crossroads and has adopted several Greyhounds of her own.



Coe, adopted by Jennifer Pease, of South Pasadena, California, through the Hemopet blood bank.

Community Service with Your Greyhound

One of the ways you can contribute to your community is by training your Greyhound to become a therapy dog.



Nancy Page with her therapy Greyhounds Nixon, Nigel, and Rudy, visit Evelyn Bill at the Fairmount Old Age Home in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Nixon and Nigel are both certified through Ambulance Therapy Dog Program and certified "child friendly." Nixon has participated in the "Paws For Stories" reading program at a local elementary school for three years. Nigel also visits a special needs eighth-grade class.

By Mary Renck Jalongo

If, like me, you read the In Memoriam section of *Celebrating Greyhounds* Magazine with tears welling up in your eyes, you may have noticed that many of these wonderful Greyhounds contributed to their communities through therapy dog work. What, exactly, is a therapy dog?

The primary role of a therapy dog is to offer the unique form of emotional support that occurs when people interact with a calm, gentle canine. Therapy dogs are "visiting dogs;" they go out into the community with their owner/handlers to reduce stress and elevate positive mood in human beings. Some of the typical places you might see therapy dogs at work are health care facilities, schools, and libraries. In order to qualify for therapy



Twelve-year-old Nairobi has provided therapy dog services for the past six years. This gentle hound not only makes regular hospital visits to cheer patients, but also works with autistic and mentally challenged children. Nairobi is part of the canine family of Barb Sabatini and Abby Oursler, of Menifee, California. Photo by Colleen's Custom Pet Photography.

work, dogs need to be nonaggressive, healthy and well-groomed, reliably house trained, enjoy interacting with strangers, and adapt readily to unfamiliar environments. These dogs are not ordinary family pets; they need to be trained and registered with a reputable therapy dog group.

While it certainly is an achievement to move a retired racer from the track to a couch, some dogs are more fulfilled by an active type of retirement. When I adopted my first Greyhound, Cuddles (DP Cuddle Bear), I was looking for a therapy dog. Although this bounce back with a distinctive limp may not have appeared to be a likely candidate, her serene sweetness trumped all else. Cuddles soon passed her Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test and the [Therapy Dogs International](#) test. Together, we completed nearly 100 volunteer visits in our community. Yet without opportunities

beyond the home, her talents would have remained undiscovered. Cuddles was reserved with shy or anxious people and would wait for them to make the first move. She was outgoing with the confident and would stride up to be petted or hugged. When she met people who were inexpressibly sad, she would gently place her head in the person's lap. This attunement to human beings is a defining characteristic of the true therapy dog.

Identify the Right Dog for the Job

If you already have one or more Greyhounds, one with therapy dog potential could be lounging in your living room. Is your dog: calm and confident? affectionate and gentle? eager to please? a star at Meet and Greet? All of these things are positive indicators for therapy dog work.

When searching for a new dog through internet sites such as [Petfinder](#) or [Adopt A Pet](#), use the filters to select for tolerance



David and Marci Anderson volunteer in the Pet Friends program at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. David is pictured with their therapy Greyhounds Layla and Rosie.

of small dogs, cats, and young children, as this is indicative of a lower prey drive. Or, if you plan to work with a Greyhound rescue group that keeps its adoptables out of the mainstream, read the descriptions carefully. Even the dog's characteristic facial expression can be a clue, so look for a more relaxed appearance and "soft" eyes as opposed to an intense, laser-like stare. Let the adoption group know that your goal is therapy dog work, ask if anyone in the group is an experienced therapy dog handler, and consider their recommendations. Temperament-wise, it's best to begin with a dog who is not excessively timid or reactive; an overall "happy-go-lucky" approach to life is helpful.

Dog trainers refer to some dogs as "bomb proof," meaning that they keep their cool in situations that other dogs would find stressful. This requires a measure of resilience that not every dog can muster, despite training. My second Greyhound, Rosie

(Dewey Rachel), was very petite, young, and had never raced. Although she quickly passed her tests, Rosie is a homebody at heart. Take her out to visit and she falls silent, tucks her tail, turns away from people (unless that person happens to be a child), and can't wait to return to familiar territory. Under these circumstances, it is important to do right by the dog. At home and at age 10, Rosie is a delightful companion animal and that is more than enough.

Explore Local Resources and Socialize the Dog

Find out who visits with dogs in your community and if there is a local chapter. Some well-known organizations are:

- [Pet Partners](#) (affiliated with Delta Society)
- [Alliance of Therapy Dogs](#) (formerly Therapy Dogs Incorporated)
- [Therapy Dogs International](#)
- [Therapy Dogs United](#)

Even if you don't have a dog yet, you

might be permitted to join as an “unleashed partner” and volunteer with the organization to become familiar with their community service activities.

After you have the dog, socialization begins. This means that your dog needs to accumulate positive experiences with people of all ages, different types of dogs, other animals, and various situations. To build confidence, I walked Fiona (Budz Fiona) down our small town’s main street several times during Christmas shopping season. If passersby smiled and seemed interested, I’d say “Do you like dogs? She’ll say hello to you if you like.” Most people would stop and pet her. Toddlers and babies, with their cries and unpredictable movements, can be disconcerting to some dogs so, if we met them, I would kneel down next to her to supervise closely, keep a hand on her collar, and stay at a safe distance. She was also exposed to people using orthopedic equipment such as canes, walkers, and motorized wheelchairs. She went to a

parade where she saw horses, motor vehicles, a marching band, and so forth.

When you visit, you are likely to be going with other handler/dog teams and some may be tiny dogs. In preparation, you could go on walks with the

other therapy dogs so that everyone is acquainted. Walks at dog-friendly parks where all dogs are leashed is another way to socialize. With respect to cats, being tolerant is probably sufficient—remember that your dog is on leash at all times. For instance, one assisted living complex we visit permits residents to keep one cat in their apartments (behind a baby gate at the



Therapy Greyhound Marion, owned by Deidre Taylor, and therapy cat Lily.

door) while another has a facility cat. You also have the option of declining to visit places with cats.

Chances are that your Greyhound will need to get in and out of your car, enjoy outings, walk on slippery floors, master steps of different types, ride in elevators, go through automatic doors, walk past cars and other

vehicles, and weave around an assortment of orthopedic equipment. Take your dog along on quick outings, such as going through the bank drive-through. Find out which stores in your area permit dogs; usually pet and farm supply stores and some home improvement stores allow dogs.

Talk with people who have well-trained dogs and borrow books and videos on positive, gentle methods of dog training from the library or online to set your expectations appropriately. Although therapy groups do not require you to attend classes to take the test, you may want to pursue formal training, so ask exemplary therapy dog handlers for their recommendations.

Understand the Purpose of Training

Effective therapy dog training is neither a bunch of useless tricks nor a spirit-crushing boot camp. It is a route to doing more with your dog, enjoying the dog's company



Cathy Metzger with therapy Greyhound Robin at Neville Place in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Lily volunteers with Therapy Dogs International in the Chicago area with owner Pam Hendrix. She especially likes the library visits where the kids read to her. She's a very good listener!

more, and sharing a dog you love with appreciative others. Have you ever noticed that your dog looks away when he or she doesn't want to listen? This is why one of the first commands your dog is expected to learn is "watch me." Its purpose is to focus the dog's attention on you. Hold a treat at eye level and, as soon as the dog is calm and meets your eyes, reward with the treat. Approach this useful command as a game, and practice it briefly several times a day to build the foundation for other tasks. After you figure out what makes your dog tick, you connect in a deeper way. For example, Fiona started growling at unfamiliar dogs after a run-in with a bulldog on a flexi-lead at a pet store. Over time, I discovered that giving her an ear rub as she meets a new dog relaxes her and reduces her fear response, so that is her reward for not growling.

Don't be intimidated by words like "training," "obedience," "command," and



Molly and her adopter Cindy Gingrich belong to the Pets and People Foundation in Massachussets. Molly is pictured during a "de-stress event" prior to college exams, and she also helps out as a library reading dog.



Rydell (Gable Rydell) and Heidi Peditto of Boardman, Ohio, make weekly visits to a local nursing home. The 5-year-old retired racing Greyhound became certified as a therapy dog in June through Therapy Dogs International.



Sparky (FTK Boca Raton) is nearly 8 years old and has been registered with Pet Partners for almost three years. He and adopter Coleen Dunchak visit schools, libraries, and nursing homes regularly. His official photo appears on the “business cards” they give out on visits.

“test.” Training is important because dogs don’t generalize the way that humans do. What they learn in one context seldom transfers to another situation — for instance, a dog may respond to commands in the house but not the yard or at

the dog park. One command that puts some people off is “leave it.” When they find out that one of the items on the test consists of placing food on the floor and the dog cannot lunge to get it, a common reaction is “I could never get my dog to do that!” But the evaluators don’t tantalize the dog with a steak; all you need to do is walk briskly by with your dog on a leash. Plus, there is a very good reason for the task—it helps to keep the dog safe. That way, if there’s something on the floor (e.g., food, a bandage, a pill); you can prevent the dog from ingesting it. You can practice the command at home with relatively uninteresting objects and build up to high-value treats. My first Greyhound had no problem with that task, but the first time we visited a patient’s room with small stuffed toys all over the counter, she was poised to go into kleptomaniac mode; that’s when the “leave it” command came to the rescue. When confronted with the unfamiliar, a therapy dog needs to look to you for leadership.



Jean Riganati adopted retired racer Cooper, who was certified to do therapy work in October 2014, through the Pets & People Foundation in central Massachusetts. Even though Cooper is blind, he does a fabulous job of visiting and comforting residents in nursing homes and adult day care facilities.

Find Your Niche

Many places you hope to visit will require therapy dog credentials. You may need clearances too, particularly if you intend to work with children. Some typical requirements

are a negative tuberculosis test, a Federal Bureau of Investigations background check (with fingerprints), and a child abuse history clearance. Reputable therapy dog groups usually assess handler/dog teams during some supervised visits before they will allow them to join their organization. They are looking for you to be reliable, punctual, and service-oriented; handle your dog effectively and represent the group well; and comply with their rules.

Every possible therapy dog event is not necessarily a good match for you and your dog. For example, we visit the local university library during exam week to reduce stress in the college students, and often have over 200 participants during a two-hour event. Some dogs thrive on the concentrated attention and hub of activity while others prefer a low-key senior center. Likewise, a very active dog may not enjoy sitting quietly with individual children as they practice reading aloud at a school or library whereas a more subdued dog might

snuggle right up with the children and get comfy. If “read/dog” programs interest you, check out:

- **Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.®) with Intermountain Therapy Animals:** One of the best-known dogs is a Greyhound named Scotts
- **Reading with Rover**
- **Tail Waggin’ Tutors** (affiliated with Therapy Dogs International)

A friend who is a retired counselor and her dog shine at bringing comfort to people experiencing severe stress; they prefer visits to hospice patients, funeral homes (at the family’s request), work with a grief support group for children, and school visits after a tragic event. Some teams thrive on brightening the day of residents of a personal care home or visiting the Alzheimer’s unit. My disabled Greyhound was a favorite in a physical therapy room because the staff and some of the patients regarded her as a kindred spirit who had to rehab after an injury.



Seven-year-old Sting is a Therapy Dogs International-certified Greyhound. He goes to Regions Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Fairview Hospital in Wyoming, Minnesota. John Muellner adopted Sting almost four years ago through Greyhound Pets of America.

We did not participate in the community health fair; however, because this involved standing in one place rather than walking around — the very thing that would aggravate a soft tissue problem with her leg.

For any responsible therapy dog team, both of you need to be ready, willing, and able to visit; you cannot allow your enthusiasm for community service to override good judgment about what is best for your canine partner. An important consideration when you work with therapy dogs is when to remove your dog from an unusually stressful situation. We once visited a school where a child was screaming and crying, and the dogs were in obvious distress. The teacher told the child that his tantrum was scaring the dogs and we exited the classroom. Interestingly, the boy settled down quickly to get the dogs to return. There also will come a time when handlers have to make the difficult decision to retire a therapy dog. When Cuddles no longer got a major case of helicopter tail at the sight of my dog visiting tote bag, I knew that she needed to retire. We later found out that she had bone cancer.

Conclusion

Retired racers have much to recommend them as therapy animals. First of all, the great majority are adult dogs with training and work experience. At the track, they have been exposed to other dogs, loud noises, music, and crowds. Many times, behaviors that other breeds find it difficult to *unlearn* — jumping up, licking, or barking — are not numbered among the typical retired racer's behaviors. All of these things are assets during therapy dog training. Although it may sound like a lot of time and effort to the person who wants to just fall in love with a dog and bring it home, volunteering in your community as handler/dog team creates a special type of bond. You are more than an owner/pet — you are partners. Just as there is tremendous satisfaction in seeing retired racers transformed into beloved companion animals, there is a special type of joy associated with watching these former athletes successfully fill the big paws of a therapy dog. ■



Therapy dogs Molly, adopted by Cindy Gingrich, and Rolo Jupiter, adopted by JoAnn Tunnessen, at the Tower Hill Botanical Garden in Boylston, Massachusetts. Photo by Judy Barrette Photography.

About the author: Mary Renck Jalongo is a book author, retired university professor, professional journal editor, and frequent contributor to Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine. She and her husband have adopted three Greyhounds. The author wants to thank Gloria Frick, dog trainer with Westmoreland County Obedience and Training Club (Delmont, Pennsylvania) and Alliance of Therapy Dogs evaluator, for reviewing this article.



Mary Collins and Greyhound Molly with their therapy friends (left to right: Laura Westley with Cleveland, Mary and Molly, Pat Heller with Thor, and Sharen Schoendorf with Kody) at the Veteran's Hospital in Palo Alto, California. Mary and Molly volunteer through Furry Friends, Pet Assisted Therapy Services.

More about Retired Racers as Therapy Dogs

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Say Cheese!

Photographs can be an important tool in promoting Greyhound adoptions.

By Mary Renck Jalongo

As technology continues to change the communications environment, society has become more visually oriented. Neuroimaging studies suggest that powerful visual images generate high levels of activity in the human brain. Just think about the pictures of Jasmine the Greyhound who acted as nursemaid to animals at the Warwickshire Wildlife Sanctuary. Even people who do not own dogs or have the slightest interest in Greyhounds took the time to forward her **photos** or the link to her **YouTube video** to Greyhound enthusiasts.

When a batch of retired racers first comes off the rack, assessing health and

temperament obviously takes precedence. Another important, yet frequently overlooked tool for promoting adoptions is the photograph that goes up on the website. Animal shelters have found that the right photograph really does make a difference; even dogs passed over for more than a year at a shelter suddenly generated adoption applications after the photograph was changed, as noted in *Huffington Post*.

What follows are tips gleaned from photographers and adoption groups on taking photos that will promote adoptions. This does not mean that you need to hire a professional photographer, only that you



Rosie (Dewey Rachel) relaxing after a run. Note how the grass helps potential adopters to imagine her right in your own backyard. Rosie was adopted by Mary and Frank Jalongo of Indiana, Pennsylvania.



Fiona (Budz Fiona) may have stitches, but she has personality (and a baby sock to dress up the bandage). She is being fostered-to-adopt by Mary and Frank Jalongo of Indiana, Pennsylvania. Photo by Darlene Graham.

need to pick up some tricks of the trade to increase the chance for a good, and quick, adoption.

Create a Photo Opp

The most common situation with retired racers is one where the dog is in a crate or fresh off the haul and a photo is snapped right in the dog's face. While it is important to get a photo posted quickly, it is well worth the time invested to take the dog aside for a few minutes and wait until he looks less terrified. A quivering dog with tail tucked way under may get sympathy, but that does not necessarily generate applications or attract a suitable adopter. Instead of worrying about your skill as a photographer, rely on your knowledge about Greyhounds to get a good photo.

Work to your strengths. If photography is not one of your strengths, get someone to help. You can hold the dog while the shutterbug takes photos. Kids and grandkids with a high-quality camera phone can get involved. If the retired racer is an all-out

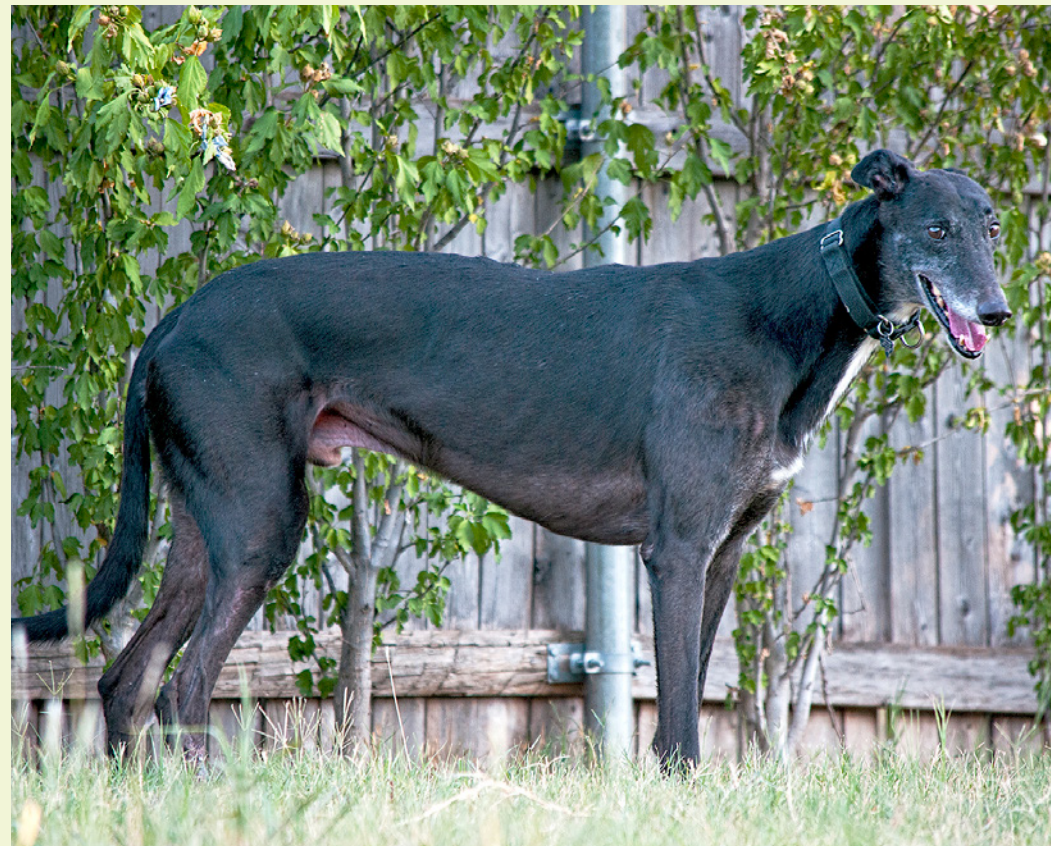
Get Inspired

Look at photographs taken by professional dog photographers and heed their advice.

- Read [Jaime Pflughoeft's top 10 photography tips](#).
- View tips from [Sean Casteel](#), a famous dog photographer who started out as a volunteer
- See a photo carousel of [Richard Phibbs' portraits](#) and the dog adoption photo albums from other artists of HeARTS Speak



The bland background and harsh sunlight doesn't present a pretty picture of this black dog, who was photographed at the last minute outside of a PetSmart during a Meet and Greet. The leash was removed in Photoshop to try to make the picture look better.



This black dog looks right at home in his foster person's backyard. His pleasant expression and relaxed pose will help attract potential adopters. He presents a prettier picture, overall, than the Greyhound who is photographed on concrete with a sterile background.

wigglebutt full of puppyish energy, try having your assistant give a squeaky toy a squeeze, then take a photo at the moment the dog

responds. This approach captures a more animated facial expression from the dog. Adapt your interaction style to the dog, using

your “Minnie Mouse” happy voice with more confident dogs and a soothing, kindly voice with the fearful ones. This goes a long way in getting the best photo.

Enlisting photographer volunteers to be on hand when a group of fosters arrives can help create good photographs. Photographers might be scheduled to arrive right after the dogs have been bathed and have relaxed. Contact a local community college or university to see if the photography instructor would be willing to use this as a service project for the class. In the process, you might identify a photographer willing to do a “Photography 101” workshop for your group or to become a regular volunteer.



To get an animated expression on the Greyhound's face, try using toys, squawkers or treats.

Appreciate the Power of the Image

Recognize that photos often will trump the description in some adopters' minds. While time is always at a premium, remind yourself that the photo you take today will represent that dog forever on your website — unless you delete or replace it.

If a dog has some very positive feature, try to capture that in the photo; for instance,

seeing a Greyhound cuddled up with a cat in foster care is far more compelling than a profile stating he or she appears to be cat-friendly. It also documents that the opinion was based on direct observation. That way, even if the dog does not work out with a different cat in a home, the photo sustains confidence in the adoption group's recommendations.

Effective photos also can save you time by steering adopters in the right direction. For instance, one adoption group encountered an unusual situation when one of their retired racers was pregnant and had pups that the kennel did not want. The photo online showed the litter curled up and snoozing. However, when placed in homes, the pups were live wires beyond the adopters' imaginations and most bounced back — a few, more than once. Something as simple as a video of the pups in action will set expectations a bit more appropriately.



Pictures of Greyhounds playing or running can show their personalities better than written biographies. A picture of a high-energy Greyhound running might dissuade the adopter who is looking for a couch potato while allowing the dog to find her perfect home with an active couple or family.

Select the Environment

Just as real estate agents recommend "staging" a home to sell it, naturalize and normalize the environment in photos to promote adoption. Professional

photographers recommend bright, natural light and organic backgrounds (e.g., plants, trees).

Avoid taking photos of dogs behind bars under fluorescent lights, peering through chain-link fence, standing in front of peeling kennel walls, or a worn-down yard with poop scoopers as the backdrop. Helping adopters to picture the dogs in their homes can be accomplished by images of Greyhounds lounging on a dog bed, carrying a toy, stretched out in the grass, or demonstrating an endearing habit (e.g., rooing, play posture, or roaching). Photos in different environments suggest the dog is adaptable, whether it is to a deck, living room, backyard, car, or baby pool.

If you care for foster dogs regularly, then you may want to invest in a special dog bed in a bright color just for indoor photo shoots. One professional photographer said his secret

for getting a dog to stay put is an electric heating pad set on low or medium. The dogs take to it, just like the sunny spot in front of a door or window.

Make the Most of Ordinary Equipment

You do not need expensive equipment; the cameras in most modern smart phones are sufficient. Set the photo resolution to at least 400 dots per inch (dpi). If you don't know much about how to use the camera, watch a YouTube video for your cell phone's make and model. Silence your phone so loud tones don't startle the dog. Turn off the flash, or you'll get glowing zombie-dog eyes and possibly frighten the dog in the process. Definitely do not zoom in on the face to get the bulbous nose effect; doing this distorts a Greyhound's elegant features. You can prevent the camera-shy "shooting" sensation by holding the

camera at chest level, as if you were texting, because not being able to see your eyes can make a dog uneasy.

Greyhounds are noted for seeking soft spaces, so a soft, brightly colored (but not busy) throw or bed that can be rolled up is useful. I have a turquoise fake fur one that is 100 percent polyester, which keeps the color from fading with frequent washing. If you get two of the same color, you can drape the area around the dog as a background (and you don't have to worry about straightening up the surrounding area) and crop the rest. One dog lover removed the third seat of his sport utility vehicle to make room for dogs and stored it in his garage. Whenever he was working in the garage, the dogs would get up on the seat, so he tacked a tablecloth to the garage wall behind it to create his own little photo shoot area.



A prop, such as a pool, fluffy dog bed, or favorite stuffy toy, can add interest to your photographs, and to the Greyhound!

Try Adding Props

Equip a large photo bag with some useful props. Capitalize on Greyhounds' tolerance for being handled and dressed up. Go beyond

the commonplace bandanas and dress them up a bit. Hit the thrift shop and equip your bag with beautiful scarves, neckties, chunky jewelry, different types of hats, or plastic

glasses with the lenses removed. Replace a faded and frayed collar with a satin or embroidered collar and lead. Use a glue gun to add some bling to a plain martingale using recycled jewelry or jewelry-making supplies from a craft store. Check online; I found a stunning hot pink "Adopt Me" bandana with the words in bling. Colorful baby bibs and hats picked up from a yard sale can dress up a dog quickly and have the advantage of ties or Velcro fasteners to keep them in place. Find a variety of colorful vet wrap at the dollar store or use a baby sock with the foot portion cut off to spruce up a bandage. Whenever using a prop, move slowly and get closer in successive attempts rather than just plopping it on and startling the dog. Let the dog sniff it and, if he or she seems wary, try something else. Avoid seasonal/holiday materials as these look dated quickly and make the dogs seem like rejects when they are still decked out in shamrocks during January.

Post Multiple Images

Post more than one photo — a profile showing the dog's sleek lines, an action shot, and a "personality shot" that captures the dog's unique qualities. These photos are more likely to appeal to a wider range of potential adopters.

You might consider a "before and after" shot for a dog that has made great strides, not as a horror show, but as a way to document rehabilitation. If something important has changed (e.g., the hair loss patches from flea dermatitis have filled in), update the photo. These days, it really is not that difficult to take a short video of the dog in action on a cell phone and add it to the website.

This is another way to generate interest in a particular dog and to fulfill the goal of "truth in advertising." For example, if adopters read that a Greyhound had surgery for a broken hock and is "getting around pretty well," what does that mean exactly? The question

is answered by a video of the injured dog keeping up with playmates in a video, even though he still favors the injured leg on the turns. Now that potentially hard-to-adopt case is accurately represented and people can make a more informed decision.

Conclusion

As you plan to take and post photos, bear in mind professional dog photographer Sean Casteel's No. 1 tip: "Remember that good photos help people to imagine the dog fitting into their homes and lives rather than seeing them as pathetic creatures, behavior problems, or damaged goods."

This can be particularly important for retired racers, given the many misconceptions about the breed in general and racing Greyhounds in particular. The photos we post today exert a negative, neutral, or positive effect on adoptions tomorrow. Photographs are a powerful means of communicating with prospective adopters.

Mary Renck Jalongo is a book author, retired university professor, professional journal editor, and frequent contributor to Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine. She and her husband have adopted three Greyhounds. The author wishes to thank Kay McNelis, president of Monica's Heart Greyhound Adoption, for her help with the article.



Busby Papier volunteers with Furry Friends, Pet Assisted Therapy Services. Busby was adopted by Candy and Steve Papier and did therapy work until the age of 12, when he passed away in May.

You're Invited



Four-year-old Bentley (AF Bentley) and 3-year-old Joey (Johanna's Jungle), adopted by Alex and Sara Petrovich, of Omaha, Nebraska.

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In Memoriam



Lancelot (Cagin Cabalero)

2004 – 2015

Lancelot (Cagin Cabalero), who turned dog haters into

Greyhound lovers,

as chronicled in *CG Magazine* (Spring 2011), and who inspired a Primer on Poop Etiquette (Fall 2011), passed away June 5, 2015, one day after his 11th birthday. A counter-surfer extraordinaire, an ambassador for adoption, an insatiable snacker, a loving brother to Poppy (Most Popular), a brindle bundle of joy and so much more, he leaves indelible paw prints on the hearts of Barb, Dave, and Adam Williams.



Katy (Jams Kathern)

1997 – 2013

Adopted and loved by David and Kathy French, Katy died peacefully at home with her parents and kind veterinarian in Richmond, Kentucky. She was 16 years old. Katy was an unusual

light-colored fawn brindle with mascara-like lined eyes. The Frenches visited the J&M Rothenberg Kennel to see how Greyhounds were raised and trained. Unbeknownst to the other, out of 80 Greyhounds present, they both fell in love with the same playful Greyhound, who would run and run until her littermates wouldn't run anymore, and then sit in a big wash tub of the dogs' drinking water. They asked if they could adopt her after her racing career was over. Martha Rothenberg was so impressed that they both liked the same dog that she made Katy's racing name that of Kathy's proper name, Kathern. She was a smaller Greyhound at

52 pounds. If she did not break out in front of the boys or the big girls, she would be jostled on the turns. When she was winning, she would turn to play with the other dogs. Consequently, her racing career was brief. She did, however, win one race. Katy was a natural in front of the camera – beautiful and she loved posing. She appeared on the cover of the Spring 2001 issue of *Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine* and was also on the Summer 2003 inside front cover. Katy was in a number of Greyhound calendars. Katy was a celebrity at the local convalescent home and marched in parades promoting Greyhound adoptions. Her “Dancing With Daddy” cover photo was so popular, it was used along with two other covers to advertise for magazine subscriptions. Katy awaits at the Rainbow Bridge, somewhat impatiently, for her mom and dad to appear.



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