



To: Arizona Department of Racing
Attn: Mr. Geoffrey Gonsler, Director
Re: Free Greyhound Program

via fax and email

March 7, 2007

Dear Mr. Gonsler,

We recently heard about the "free" greyhound program being promoted by the new GPA – Tucson chapter and Tucson Greyhound Park. We know they have a sizeable number of dogs to pet out, but we have some very serious concerns. Most troubling is the fact these dogs will leave the TGP kennels without being neutered or spayed. Just because an adopter signs a contract to have a dog altered doesn't mean that they will abide by that. We, in adoption groups know this. This community can ill afford any more grey mixes.

One of the most recent, tragic stories is that of the late Otis, grey mix of Wayne Dean infamy. Otis's father was a dog that left TGP unaltered. How many more mixes might end up out there for Pima Animal Care, The Humane Society or other rescue groups to deal with?

Just yesterday, AGR took a greyhound from PACC that they had picked near a rural road. Clubhouse Stacey was given directly to a woman about 60 days ago from a kennel owner/operator with the stipulation that Stacey be spayed right away. There is no evidence that she has been spayed or had vaccinations. She was still wearing a plastic track collar with no tags.

Will the dogs receive any vaccines, de-worming, dental work or care to treat wounds or injuries? Responsible adoption groups do these things before sending a greyhound to an adoptive home.

We are concerned about what kind of screening and education is being done with potential adopters. Those of us in adoption groups spend countless hours educating potential adopters and the public about retired racing greyhounds and dispelling misconceptions. Retired greys have unique characteristics and often face many challenges when first arriving in an adoptive home.

There are the things like frequent diarrhea from stress, new diets or internal parasites, separation anxiety, marking behaviors, destructive chewing, sleep aggression, counter surfing and adjustment to other dog species, large and small and cats or children.

Without adequate preparation, information and support, some of these behaviors can become overwhelming to a new adopter and can result in negative and inappropriate responses to the greyhound, harm to a small animal or child and often a rebound situation.

Many greys are quite shy or have fears of new or strange situations when first in a home. Recent retirees often need dental work. Keeping greyhounds leashed when outside an enclosed area, not leaving them outside all the time, not tying them out, being aware of anesthetic and chemical sensitivities are basic things many folks just don't know. Are adopters being told these things?

Without proper education, we fear more un-informed, negligent or abusive adopters like Gilbert Mendibles with Boston.

What follow up is being done with adopters? How will rebounds be handled that occur in a few weeks, months or even years? Will GPA - Tucson be taking these dogs back or helping adopters with problems that arise? Not long ago, I talked with a woman for 45 minutes who had adopted a dog directly from TGP and needed help. She didn't know where to find that "special collar thing" she needed for her dog. Her dog had on-going diarrhea and separation anxiety. She didn't know what to do. Will GPA- Tucson be helping the adopters with situations like this or taking rebounds or expecting others in the community to do that?

The idea of a "free" pet is reminiscent of boxes of free puppies and kittens on the corner. One wonders how valued these animals are when they are given away for free. We are not talking here about a free soda or bag of popcorn, but a living entity that requires a great deal of care, attention and understanding. Free often becomes throw away. Will these dogs end up as bait for fighting dogs?

At the very least, these dogs should leave GPA-Tucson and the track being altered, with up to date vaccines and a martingale collar and leash with a GPA - Tucson ID tag in case they go missing. Hopefully, detailed information is being kept that matches dogs with adopters. These seem like the only responsible things to do for the care and well-being of the greyhounds and the benefit of the adopters and the community. Free greyhounds are not the answer.

*Mary Freeman
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The Board of Directors
Arizona Greyhound Rescue*