

Guam Greyhounds Get Fresh Start in LA

By David Ono **KABC Los Angeles** 2.20.09

More the 100 Greyhounds abandoned after a track in Guam shut down.

FILLMORE, Calif. (KABC) -- More than 100 greyhound dogs have been abandoned, left to fend for themselves after a dog-racing track in Guam shut down last fall. Some of the greyhounds are now starving and others are injured and need medical help.

This crisis is unfolding 6,000 miles away, on the island of [Guam](#), a U.S. territory. But now the greyhounds are being flown to Los Angeles in search of new homes.

- [Guam Greyhounds -- Rescuing greyhounds in distress](#)
- [Homestretch Greyhound Rescue and Adoption](#)

"If these dogs don't get off their island, they have no place to go," said Barbara Davenport, [The Homestretch Greyhound Rescue and Adoption](#).

"They're all just going to be killed," said Davenport.

The lucky ones have been rescued from near certain death.

"This is Houdini," said Davenport, introducing one of the dogs. "He's the first of the Guam greyhounds."

One by one, Davenport is working in Fillmore to get all the abandoned greyhounds off the island of Guam.

"They were running loose, being found starving, dehydrated," said Davenport.

The dogs were abandoned after the greyhound race track shut down in November.

"The dogs are essentially a byproduct of the racing industry," said Davenport. "When the dogs are no longer useful, they start costing money because they still have to be fed and housed."

Some dogs were handed out to families on Guam, only to be abandoned once their new owners realized greyhounds are too gentle to be good guard dogs.

"They've been found tied up to cars, trucks, boats, with no shelter, no food, no water," said Davenport. "Apparently people are taking pot shots at them, using them for target practice."

The greyhound racing industry is a dying breed. Thirty-five states have outlawed it, but race tracks still operate in 10 states.

"The dogs do like to run, but they shouldn't be abused for it, they shouldn't be made to sit in a cage, 22, 23 hours a day doing nothing, just so they can race once or twice a week for 30 seconds," said Davenport.

Gary Guccione represents the racing industry.

"There is plenty of room with the crates," said Guccione. "They are quite large, plenty for a greyhound to stand up, stretch out."

Critics say once the dogs are no longer profitable, some track owners look for ways to get rid of the dogs cheaply.

"There are dogs who are sold to research," said Davenport. "There are dogs who are dumped."

Twenty-thousand greyhounds "retire" each year from racing. Many are adopted, but even industry officials admit that 2,000 to 3,000 dogs are legally killed each year.

"If they are euthanized, it has to be done in a humane manner," said Guccione.

But greyhound rescue groups say the number of greyhounds killed because they can no longer race is much higher, closer to 15,000 dogs a year.

Then there are the injuries: broken necks, dying instantly, crushed skulls, dead on arrival. One dog dropped dead at the finish line.

These "canine refugees" still love to run, but now they're running free, at Barbara Davenport's Fillmore home.

"What Homestretch is trying to do is be sort of a way station at the moment," said Davenport. "The dogs are coming in in batches of two, three, four."

The dogs get lots of tender loving care and medical care if needed. Then it's off to a network of other greyhound shelters that will take the dogs in until permanent homes can be found.

More than 100 greyhounds will fly into Los Angeles in the next few months, looking to land a comfortable couch to call home.

"They're so loving and so appreciative after what they've been through, still trusting," said Davenport. "They're very easy, they don't make a big fuss, they're quiet, they're clean, they're lazy."

The owners of the track in Guam that shut down are now cooperating with rescue groups to help house the remaining greyhounds until they can be flown to L.A.