

# Vet's Notes



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## Non-chasing and field shy greyhounds

**HAVE** you recognised these signs in any of your greyhounds?

The pup breaks-in extraordinarily well and shows lots of promise but the racing performance never lives up to that.

What used to be good dedicated chasing has deteriorated into apparent lack of interest in the lure, failing to chase, bumping into the back of other contestants, and generally just running along in the field.

Would you be surprised, even resentful, to learn that these drastic changes are most likely to be your fault, or the fault of your training management and handling, rather than some personality defect in the greyhound itself?

Well, like it or not, it is very likely to be true. Thanks to the research findings of Prof Greg Ackland in USA, and his clinical studies of such greyhounds here in Australia, we now know the reason for these changes in performance, and, what trainers can do to prevent similar detriment in the future.

This historic research has demonstrated beyond doubt the core of the problem is a progressive deterioration in the tiny blood vessels and nerve fibres in the Retina at the back of the eyeball. This results in a slowly progressive inability of the greyhound to focus the eyes quickly on moving objects such as a lure or other contestants in a field. Consequently, it literally makes a “guide dog” of greyhounds around him/her and earns the scornful reputation as a non-chaser, or of being field-shy. The sad thing about this situation is that the deterioration in vision is almost 100% caused unwittingly by a lack of simple preventative measures when handling greyhounds at trials and races.

What happens is this.

At the conclusion of the trial or race, the greyhound arrives in the catching pen puffing heavily, with an elevated temperature due to the physical exertion. It has greatly increased blood pressure due to the adrenalin release from the excitement of travel to the track, plus the kennelling, boxing, and competing in the field.

This combination of increased blood pressure and elevated temperature causes the tiny blood vessels in the back of the eyeball to rupture, resulting in progressive damage to the sensitive nerve fibres responsible for detailed vision.

Now the greyhound develops the condition known to vets as Focal Multifocal Acquired Retinopathy (FMAR) and which is often is misdiagnosed as the genetic defect of Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA) which is actually a very rare defect in this breed. Incidentally, some advanced cases of FMAR are recognised by trainers as Night Blindness.

So, can this injury be minimised or prevented?

The answer is yes, quite simply by reducing the temperature of the blood flowing to the head after track work, and minimising stress in order to lower blood pressure towards normal.

This requires cooling of the head and neck of the greyhound by cold hosing of these areas immediately after removal from the catching pen during the post-run wash-down.

You must provide access to cool drinking water and rest in a cool area back in the airconditioned kennels, or in an open shaded space, or breezeway. The whole key to avoiding FMAR is sensible and responsible handling of the patient immediately after any fast track work.

Think about it.

Most non-chasing and field-shy greyhounds develop the problems progressively, they are not born that way. FMAR can start at the breaking-in stage and progress with further work.

Hot and humid weather are most conducive to the high temperature aspect of the injuries, but FMAR

can develop during any season in circumstances of inadequate management and handling.

Ever notice our human athletes post race?

They seek shade, have a cool drink, wipe their head and neck with a wet cool towel, and dash water over their head and face.

There must be a lesson there for good greyhound trainers?

### **WARNING**

Research information published earlier this year in the prestigious medical “Fertility and Sterility Journal” reports females that have been on any of the NSAIDs (Non- Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs) will be unlikely to be able to shed their eggs from the ovaries at the time of mating.

Most of this work by Prof Robert Norman, Director of Reproductive Medicine at the University of Adelaide, has been conducted on animals, but he warns it can apply equally to human reproduction as well.

The NSAIDs include the routine antiinflammatories such as BTZ (Phenylbutazone), Carprofen, Celebrex, Ketoprofen, Meloxicam, and a whole range of related compounds which are used regularly for the relief of the pain and swelling associated with arthritic joints, muscle tears, and ligament sprains. Prof Norman explains that in animal studies, these drugs block the effect of the natural compound Prostaglandin which is produced in the body, and which causes the inflammation when generated and released in the injured areas of the body.

That same Prostaglandin plays a critical role in the normal regulation of ovulation and release of the egg from the ovaries.

This might help to explain the enormous variation that sometimes occurs with the Progesterone Blood Test to detect ovulation.

Consequently, if a greyhound bitch has been on any NSAID medication for arthritis or other soreness, and, is to be presented for natural mating, or, for FSI, it is very likely she will be unable to shed her eggs from the ovary for up to two weeks after the completion of the NSAID course of treatment.

In which case, she will “miss” and fail to conceive.

If she does “miss” who gets the blame?

The Stud Dog, of course!

That is why Studmasters need to be wary and inquire as to the medical record of every bitch presented for mating, so the reputation of the Stud Dog can be protected, quite apart from the financial loss and inconvenience associated with such situations.

On a more reassuring note, the NSAID medications do not have any effect on the fertilised eggs or the

foetus in the womb.

Their only adverse effect is on the release of the eggs from the ovaries, that is, on fertility and conception.

A spokesperson for one of our major drug manufacturers, when presented with is research information, admitted it was well recognised NSAIDs had an effect on Prostaglandin production and therefore may affect fertility, not only in animals, but also in women seeking to become pregnant.

So the use of these medications should be discussed with their human or animal health provider.