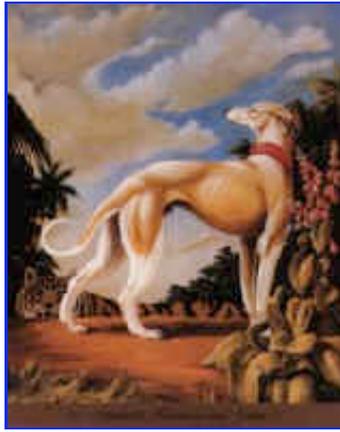
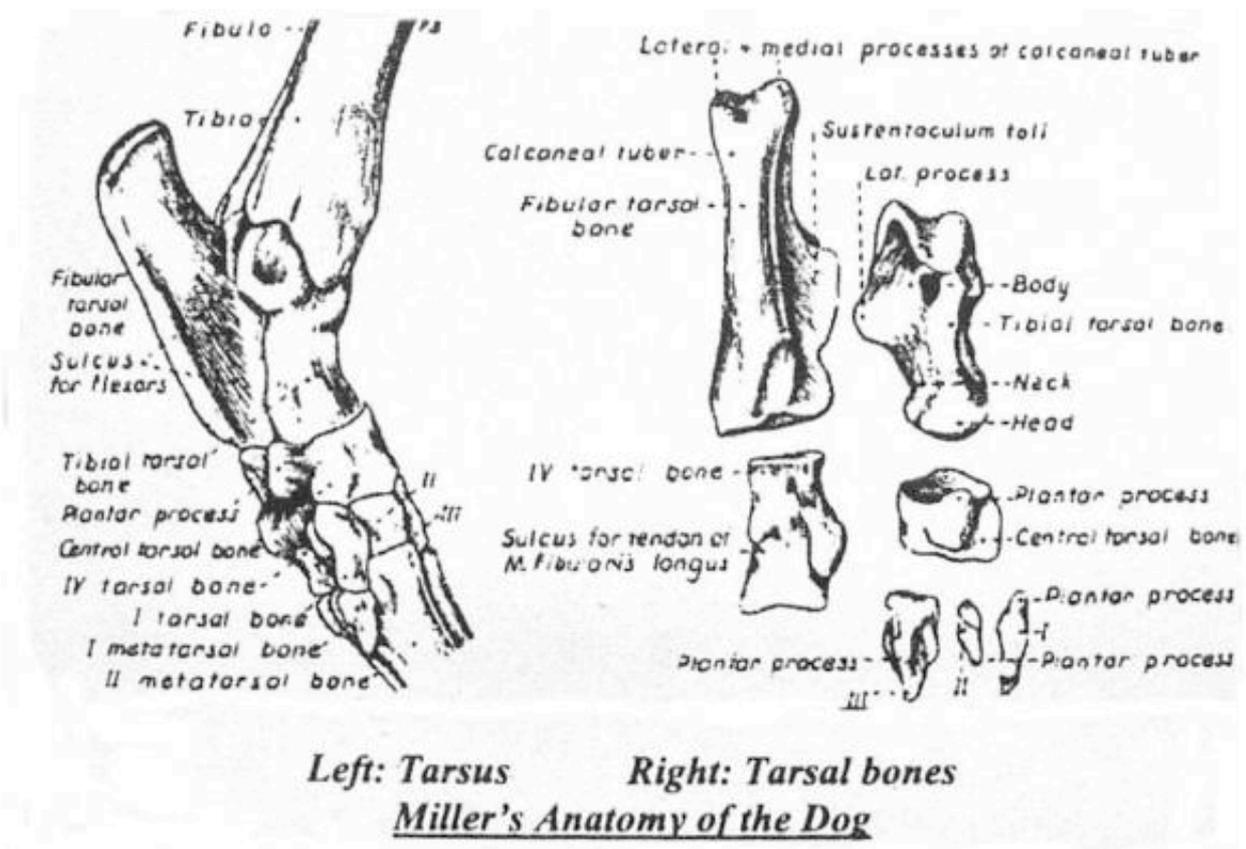


HOCK FRACTURES



Von Grone, Antoinette Baronesse (1954 -)

Suzanne Stack, DVM



"Right hock fractures are the most common career ending injury of racing greyhounds. Certainly, more toes and metacarpals/metatarsals ("quarter bones") are broken, but their racing careers are more often salvageable. The right hock is usually the one to go, most commonly in the first turn, where the greyhound pushes off with it on the banked curve. There is perhaps one fractured left hock for every 30 fractured right hocks.

My feeling is that adoption groups should not reject these greyhounds because they lack funds to fix the hocks. It's been about 10 years since I've been around racetracks --but back then, unless an owner planned to continue the dog's racing career, a broken hock was never fixed.

To heal adequately for pet purposes (though they will lack the few 1/100s of a second needed for racing), all the majority of hock fractures need is 6 -- 12 months of house or kennel rest somewhere. The 'how long' depends on how picky the adopter is -- does the gait need to be perfect before they will accept the dog? Is there an adopter who will take the greyhound if the gait never does become perfect in one of the "bad" fractures?

The reason hocks heal so well with so few repercussions is that the usual fracture is a slab fracture of a tiny (<1") bone (central tarsal bone) in a non-moving joint. Sometimes, more than one of these tiny tarsal bones is involved - there are 5 of them, plus the larger talus and calcaneus bones making up the hock joint. Since the fracture is in a non-moving joint to begin with, the arthritis that develops around the site is fairly insignificant to the dog's movement. And it takes movement to cause pain.

There are a few more disastrous hock fractures, such as when the tip of the calcaneus bone (tip of the hock) breaks off and the dog's Achilles tendon goes with it. This is a dog that really needs surgery to function right. But, the bottom line is, I still wouldn't let him die for lack of funds for an orthopedic surgery. My old lady, Jamie, is living proof that while these greyhounds are gimps (mechanically, their Achilles tendon does not work), they're not in pain for the rest of their lives.



"Lily", owned by Jonny Lippincott, shows the typical calcification bump of a healed right hock fracture.

Many kudos to the groups who do fix these fractures. And also to racing owners who will pay for surgery even when the greyhound is "all done." But, for those groups who can't afford it -

if you have a foster home that can give a hock fracture house rest (no galloping) for a long, long time, please take these greyhounds and give them a chance. Except for the big calcified bump on that hock, they will be "good as new" once healed.