

# Greyhounds

## Introduction

Greyhound breeding and rearing is an integral part of rural life in Ireland and while it is a relatively small sector of the Irish agriculture as a whole, it is an important element in the country's livestock sector.

Greyhound racing was introduced into Ireland in 1927. There are a total number of 17 tracks in Ireland. Eight are fully owned by the Irish Greyhound Board (IGB) and the rest are owned by private enterprise. Development of the industry has been restricted due to the relatively low profitability for the primary producer in Greyhound breeding and rearing. Presently, there is an oversupply of greyhounds in Ireland. The greyhound sector is supported by the Department of Agriculture as an alternative farming enterprise.

The Alternative Enterprises Scheme (AES) provides for the payment of grant aid towards the cost of establishing facilities for the rearing of animals, which are outside the mainstream of Irish agriculture such as greyhounds. Information can be obtained from Agricultural Structures Division of Dept. of Agriculture.

## The Market

The greyhound racing industry is worth in excess of €300 million annually to the Irish economy and the sector continues to maintain exceptional growth. On average, over 26,500 people go greyhound racing in Ireland every week. The Irish Greyhound Board (IGB), in conjunction with the British, American and Australian greyhound boards are now conducting the richest once off greyhound race in the world – the €1 million world greyhound championship which will further develop the industry. Approximately 20,000 greyhound puppies are registered each year in Ireland. The introduction of funds is helping to bring about improvements in the many facets of the industry, which can maximise returns to breeders for effort and investment.

## Breeding

Unlike other countries where large industrial type breeding and racing kennels are more prevalent, the core greyhound support in Ireland comes from the small part-time greyhound owner and breeder.

The profile of a typical Irish Breeder is that of a small farmer or rural dweller who keeps one, two or three dams for breeding purposes; who then may sell some of the pups at eight to twelve weeks of age to other owners. Pups are then reared to racing age. The greyhounds are then raced to demonstrate their capabilities for sale or export purposes. Many farm families are involved in breeding in that they buy or own a good brood bitch from which they breed young dogs. Many decide to become involved with greyhounds as part of a syndicate. A syndicate is a group of four or more members who own shares in a greyhound and who divide the costs and benefits associated with this ownership equally.



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*This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.*

*All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website [www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie)*

**Edited by:**  
**John Whiriskey**  
**Paul McCarthy**  
Teagasc  
Mellows Development  
Centre  
Athenry, Co. Galway.  
**+ 353 (0) 91 845200**

Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources.

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## Purchasing a greyhound

Upcoming Sales Auctions of greyhounds can be seen at [www.igb.ie/sales\\_auctions.aspx](http://www.igb.ie/sales_auctions.aspx)

Pups and Saplings for sale can be seen at [www.greyhounds.ie/pups.php](http://www.greyhounds.ie/pups.php)

You can advertise race dogs or pups and saplings for sale at [www.greyhounds.ie/advertise.htm](http://www.greyhounds.ie/advertise.htm)

Pups, saplings and race dogs are also for sale in weekly publications such as the 'Sporting Press' and 'Greyhound Weekly'.

## Profile

Track Greyhounds can vary in size and range in weight from 25 to 40 kilos. Bitches average around 4 to 7 kilos less than dogs. The average lifespan is twelve to fourteen years.

The Greyhound is a friendly and docile animal and can be very affectionate towards those they know and trust. Greyhounds are capable of running at up to 60kph when in full flight, are the 18<sup>th</sup> fastest land mammal and are born racers. As a general rule, a greyhound will usually reach its peak between the ages of two and a half and three and a half. Young dogs starting out in their careers are likely to improve with age and experience and some maintain their form for much longer periods than others depending on training regime and the occurrence of injuries.

If the greyhound gets injured the outcome depends on the extent of the injury. While most injuries can be treated, there are occasions where it may be more suitable to consider breeding the dog or keeping it as a pet.

## Rearing

Greyhounds are primarily a sprinting breed and should be reared with plenty of exercise otherwise they will become restless and bored. The exercise is also vital for proper growth and development.

Greyhounds should be deloused and wormed a few times during the year. Greyhounds are quite prone to both skeletal and muscle injuries.

Greyhounds, Pups and Saplings should be fed high protein diets to ensure proper development. Complete feeds are available to purchase.

## Establishment Costs and Profit Margins

Several factors influence the cost of a greyhound including age, gender, breeding and general appearance. It is difficult to know if you are buying a good brood bitch as often the suitability of the cross with a certain stud dog determines the off-spring quality.

The cost of a greyhound depends on the dog's breeding.

The cost of a greyhound is from €300 upwards with some exceptional racers costing over €20,000.

Training racing dogs can be done by oneself or you may choose to send the greyhound to a professional trainer. Many books have been published on training, feeding and caring for the racing greyhound. Similar books are available which concentrate on breeding and caring for greyhound pups.

It is advisable to find a trainer in the area where the dog is likely to do most of its racing. The cost of its upkeep varies, but a good estimate is between €50 and €80 per week. There will be small costs thereafter, for entry fees to races and so on. Entry into a small race is about €10 and the bigger stakes cost about €40. Greyhounds begin racing from eighteen months onwards and continue until they are about four years of age. Over 70 events in Ireland annually command a first prize of €6,350 or more. However, there are numerous opportunities to win smaller amounts, ranging from €250 upwards.

<b>Purchase of greyhound</b>	<b>€3,000</b>
<b>Trainer</b>	<b>€60 per week</b>
<b>Entry to Races</b>	<b>€10</b>

**Co-ordinated by: Paul Mc Carthy, Teagasc, Mellows Development Centre, Athenry, Co. Galway**

**Email: [paul.mccarthy@teagasc.ie](mailto:paul.mccarthy@teagasc.ie) ☎ +353 (0)91 845200**