

Dogs for rent on a website in China, we ask...



Blurred information: Dogs in China are registered to Irish owners

it is now pushing for proposed legislation on greyhound exports at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine but warned action may be needed at an EU level.

'Currently, there is no legislation prohibiting the export of greyhounds, however the IGB had already stated their opposition of exports to countries that do not meet Ireland's welfare standards. The movement of all dogs between member states is currently set on a European level. We would welcome more legislation but it has to come from Brussels. This may require any further legislative changes to be sponsored at a European level rather than as a national measure in isolation.'

So what is the IGB doing to push for change? The spokesman added they were pushing for a more robust traceability in the form of a database with all racing dogs and their subsequent significant life events registered.

'The IGB believes this would be a significant step forward in ensuring greater welfare and accountability. This traceability measure has been proposed by the IGB into the Greyhound Industry Bill 2017 which is under pre-legislative scrutiny. We recognise there's a responsibility for the IGB and owners to look after greyhounds and our ambition is every dog is rehomed after a racing career.'

Ireland's greyhound industry seems to be lurching from one

Change needs to come from an EU level

What happens to the majestic hounds left with nowhere to run?

age of around 13 months old. So what happened to the other approximately 10,000 puppies? During this period, 2,896 were surrendered to pounds, where 2,497 were destroyed — a rate of about 38 a month. Just 399 were homed or collected.

Litter numbers are down from 3,272 litters registered in 2011, to 2,520 in 2016. However, despite this natural breeding adjustment — welcomed by charities struggling to home unwanted dogs — the IGB last year injected €700,000 into

a new breeder and trainer incentive scheme.

Yet money spent by the Irish Retired Greyhound Trust (IRGT) — an arm of the IGB that works with greyhound charities to rehome retired dogs — has fallen. According to the IRGT report, submitted to the Charities Regulator, its total income in 2014 was €202,864. In 2015, this was down to €182,079.

The IGB insists: 'A contribution from prize money is made to the IRGT, which is then matched by

the IGB directly. Prize money, and therefore the IRGT contribution, was reduced in 2014 but the number of greyhounds rehomed increased significantly — in 2014, it was 614, in 2015 it was 764 and in 2016 it was 891. Prize money has increased in 2016 and just recently in 2017 which will further support the IRGT.'

But the questions remains — where are our dogs going? The ICC's Irish Greyhound Stud Book doesn't operate a register on exports. The Department of Agri-

culture, Food and the Marine says trade within the EU of dogs, including greyhounds, is governed by EU law.

'If dogs are moved to another EU country from Ireland, they must be accompanied by an EU pet passport, be microchipped and have a valid rabies vaccination. Also under EU law, the premises exporting dogs must be registered with the department. Dogs must also have a health certificate issued by a department veterinarian.'

The IGB told the Irish Daily Mail

crisis to the next. Racing at Shelbourne Park was halted for four months as The Dublin Greyhound Owners and Breeders Association picketed the stadium due to the IGB's decision to sell off Harold's Cross stadium to pay a 'legacy debt' of €20.3 million.

The greyhound industry is in decline. In 2006, the IGB made more than €50million on the totes but last year revenues had fallen to €20million. It has also been mired in controversy of late, with its finances probed by the Public Accounts Committee over the sale of Harold's Cross and its anti-doping regulations coming under fire in an RTE Prime Time Investigates programme.

Since 2010, the taxpayer has handed over €99.6million to greyhound racing, via the Horse and Racing Greyhound Fund.

This year alone it's set to receive €16million, an extra €1.2million compared with last year and up €5.2million since 2010.

Figures like this prompt Richard King to ask: 'The IGB and the department have a moral obligation to the Irish taxpayers who are funding the industry — why are we being given wrong information on greyhounds?'

Mr King is calling on the Government to halt greyhound exports. 'We have all the systems in place,' says Richard, 'all we have to do is enforce them.'

The IGB this week welcomed information from the Irish Daily Mail about the Irish greyhounds breeding in China. A spokesman said: 'The IGB is investigating the circumstances of these greyhounds being in China and, following its investigation, sanctions will be imposed on any persons found to be in breach of the Welfare of Greyhounds Act 2011.'

But how many more Irish greyhounds will have to suffer before there's the political will to give them the dignity they deserve?