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Characteristics of ex-racing greyhounds in New Zealand and their impact on re-homing

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Abstract

A small proportion of greyhounds surplus to the racing industry are entered into specialist re-homing organisations to be re-purposed as pets. Records of 835 greyhounds, from New Zealand Greyhounds as Pets, were used to investigate whether pre-adoption characteristics (age, sex, racing record, reason entered) and management factors (temperament test result, foster and trainer effects) had a bearing on re-homing success, and comparisons were made with shelter studies. Re-homing greyhounds as pets is very successful with 85.5% ultimately successfully re-homed. Only 2.9% fail as a result of failed adoptions and 11.6% fail the initial temperament test and are therefore not considered for adoption. Greyhounds were more likely than shelter dogs to pass an initial temperament test and be adopted, and less likely to be returned after one month. However, adopted greyhounds were just as likely as shelter dogs to be returned after six months. Logistic regression revealed the youngest age group (< 25 months old) were more likely to pass the initial temperament test than older greyhounds. The re-homing success of greyhounds subsequently made available for adoption was not affected by age, but a sex effect was evident with females more likely to be successfully re-homed than males. Whether or not a dog had raced had no significant effect on the likelihood of successful re-homing. Greyhounds passing the temperament test with a basic pass were less likely to be successfully re-homed than greyhounds scoring a higher pass indicative of lower prey drive. Further investigation of the validity and reliability of the temperament test is warranted.

Keywords: *age, animal welfare, dog, greyhound racing, re-homing, temperament test*