

9 August 2024

DECISION

GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA

and

REBEKKA PIPER

- Date of hearing:** 5 August 2024
- Date of decision:** 5 August 2024
- Panel:** Judge Marilyn Harbison (Deputy Chairperson) and Ms Melissa Mahady.
- Appearances:** Mr Anthony Pearce appeared on behalf of the Stewards.
Ms Rebekka Piper represented herself.
- Charges:** Greyhounds Australasia Rule ("GAR") 21(1)(d) states:
(1) A person must ensure that any greyhound in the person's care or custody, is at all times provided with:
(d) veterinary attention when necessary.
- GAR 21(1)(e) states:
(1) A person must ensure that any greyhound in the person's care or custody, is at all times provided with:
(e) appropriate treatment for the greyhound if the person is in charge of a sick or injured greyhound.
- GAR 21(2) states:
(2) A person must exercise the care and supervision necessary to prevent a greyhound under the person's care or custody from being subjected to unnecessary pain or suffering, or from anything which is likely to lead to unnecessary pain or suffering.
- Particulars:** **Charge 1: GAR 21(1)(d)**
1. You were, at all relevant times, an attendant and breeder registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) (Member No.

330562) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.

2. At all relevant times, you had the greyhound “Chloe” (VLCAO) in your care or custody, at a GRV registered kennelling premises in Seymour, Victoria.

3. On 5 March 2024, an inspection at this premises found that Chloe had sustained a laceration from an altercation with another greyhound to her shoulder on 1 March 2024.

4. Up until the time of the inspection on 5 March 2024, Chloe had not received any veterinary attention.

5. You failed to ensure that the greyhound Chloe was, at all times, provided with veterinary attention when necessary.

Charge 2: GAR 21(1)(e)

1. You were, at all relevant times, an attendant and breeder registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) (Member No. 330562) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.

2. At all relevant times, you had the greyhound “Chloe” (VLCAO) in your care or custody, at a GRV registered kennelling premises in Seymour, Victoria.

3. On 5 March 2024, an inspection at this premises found that Chloe had sustained a laceration from an altercation with another greyhound to her shoulder on 1 March 2024.

4. The treatment you have provided to Chloe, has included stapling the laceration using a surgical staple gun.

5. You failed to ensure that the injured greyhound Chloe was, at all times, provided with appropriate treatment.

Charge 3: GAR 21(2)

1. You were, at all relevant times, an attendant and breeder registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) (Member No. 330562) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.
2. At all relevant times, you had the greyhound “Chloe” (VLCAO) in your care or custody, at a GRV registered kennelling premises in Seymour, Victoria.
3. On 5 March 2024, an inspection at this premises found that Chloe had sustained a laceration from an altercation with another greyhound to her shoulder on 1 March 2024.
4. The treatment you have provided to Chloe, has included stapling the laceration using a surgical staple gun.
5. A subsequent veterinary inspection identified the need for treatment, that included surgical repair of the laceration, pain medication, and antibiotics.
6. You failed to exercise the care and supervision necessary to prevent Chloe from being subjected to unnecessary pain or suffering, or from anything which is likely to lead to unnecessary pain or suffering.

Pleas: Guilty

DECISION

1. Ms Rebekka Piper is a registered attendant and breeder with Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”). She has very little experience in these roles, as she has been registered as an attendant only since October 2023 and has never owned or bred greyhounds. At the time of these offences, she was employed as an attendant by two owners to care for their registered greyhounds in Seymour.

2. On the 5 March 2024, Investigative Stewards attended at that kennel address to conduct a kennel inspection. Ms Piper was present at the inspection, together with Mr Taylor Thornton, a registered trainer operating from that property.
3. During the inspection, the Stewards found that one of the greyhounds, known as “Chloe” – not having a registered kennel name – was suffering from visible injuries. The first was a shoulder laceration and the second was a sore to its rear side. They were particularly concerned with the shoulder laceration. It appeared that that injury had been stapled with a medical staple gun and a purple healing spray had been applied.
4. Ms Piper admitted having applied the staples and the healing spray. She has no veterinary or medical skills or training. She found the staple device herself and did not speak to anyone for advice before treating the wound. She used the staple gun by following the instructions on the box.
5. It appears that the greyhound had suffered an injury on Friday 1 March 2024, some four days before the inspection, and Ms Piper had taken it upon herself to attend to the wound.
6. The problem was that the wound was a significant one requiring immediate veterinary treatment. The treatment which she applied was woefully inadequate. Once it was discovered by the Stewards, Ms Piper was directed to seek veterinary treatment for the wound. This eventually resulted in the wound being debrided and re-stapled by way of general anaesthetic.
7. As a result of her action in attending to the wound herself and not obtaining veterinary treatment, Ms Piper has been charged with three offences.
8. The first Charge is a Charge that she did not ensure that Chloe received veterinary attention when necessary.
9. The second Charge is a Charge that in treating Chloe in the way we have described she failed to ensure that the greyhound was provided with appropriate treatment.
10. The third Charge is a Charge that she subjected Chloe to unnecessary pain and suffering by reason of her treating the greyhound with the staple gun whilst the greyhound had no pain medication and failing to ensure that the greyhound received a proper surgical repair to the injury.
11. Ms Piper has pleaded guilty to each of these Charges. The Charges are serious because her actions resulted in the prolongation of pain and suffering to the greyhound. Animal welfare is of paramount importance in this industry.

12. On the other hand, it is clear that Ms Piper has had very little experience in handling greyhounds. She was trying to assist, even though that assistance was misguided and inadequate. She has pleaded guilty to the Charges at the first available opportunity and has cooperated fully with the Stewards.
13. Taking into account all the mitigatory factors, the penalty which we impose is as follows:

Charge 1: six months disqualification to be served concurrently with the penalty imposed on Charge 3.

Charge 2: six months disqualification to be served concurrently with the penalties imposed on Charges 1 and 3.

Charge 3: 12 months disqualification, with six months fully suspended for 24 months pending no further relevant offences during that time.
14. We regard Charge 3 as the most serious offence and have treated it as the head sentence. We have determined to allow concurrency of the other sentence given that each of the Charges arise out of a common factual basis.
15. The effective six month disqualification is to commence immediately.

Kathleen Scully
Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal