

## **Australian Veterinary Association**

### **Quote for Project: Assessment of best practice rearing, socialisation, education and training methods for greyhounds in a racing context**

**RFQ number: GRNSW310315**

1 May 2015

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the only national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Our 8500 members come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, farm animals such as cattle and sheep, and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health and quarantine systems while other members work in industry for pharmaceutical and other commercial enterprises. We have members who work in research and teaching in a range of scientific disciplines. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

There are 21 special interest groups within the AVA. These special interest groups include Australian Greyhound Veterinarians whose members are experts in greyhound medicine, surgery and wellbeing, and the Australian Veterinary Behaviour Interest Group whose members have specific skills and expertise in animal behaviour. The project team submitting this proposal includes representatives of both these expert groups.

### **Project overview**

The AVA will review current domestic and international practices, as well as the available research and science in relation to rearing, socialising, educating and training both greyhounds and other performance dogs. Using these sources of information, the report will provide evidence-based best practice recommendations for greyhounds in NSW. Recommendations will be made on how best practice methods might be implemented in order to mitigate the risk of live baiting practices and support a sustainable, vibrant and humane greyhound racing industry that will enjoy ongoing community support. Key knowledge gaps have already been identified and recommendations can be made on how to prioritise and undertake research to fill those gaps.

The racing greyhound is considered to be a performance breed but the life cycle compared with other working breeds is unique. Currently, most rearing of greyhounds is conducted on large scale commercial operations where dogs receive limited individual handling or education during critical periods. Racing dogs may have to accept multiple changes of environments and handlers until retirement at approximately four years of age. They are then expected to settle into a domestic pet environment. Adaptation to such marked and frequent changes represent major challenges which many greyhounds may be unable to meet.

The AVA's approach to this project will combine relevant research from the field of canine behaviour, veterinary medical expertise, and the unique characteristics of greyhounds. The report's recommendations will be based in sound research evidence as well as practical application in the real world of greyhound racing.

## **Expertise and demonstrated capacity to address the project scope**

The AVA project team has broad veterinary expertise as well as significant experience in the greyhound industry. Its strength is the breadth and depth of team members' practical experience in greyhound medicine, breeding, rearing and training as well as canine behavior and training. As the AVA is the voice of the profession, the team will also be able to reflect the perspectives of the broader veterinary profession on the questions under consideration. The AVA project team is assisted by expert consultants in animal welfare and ethics, and greyhound medicine, and is supported by professional staff with expertise in policy development, implementation and communication.

### **Project scope item 1**

*Review and assess current domestic and international methods of the rearing, socialisation education and training of greyhounds in their lifecycle including any significant shift from the use of live animal baits and lures.*

The AVA team is particularly well qualified to assess current practices relating to the health and nutritional requirements of greyhounds and to provide recommendations to achieve best practice throughout all periods of a greyhound's life.

As the basic theories of learning, reinforcement and socialisation are consistent between species the team will review current local and international practices used in a variety of performance animals, including regulatory and education programs.

In particular, reviews of recent modifications made to training systems employed for working and sporting dogs will be undertaken.

Current methods of rearing, socialisation, education and training of greyhounds will be investigated through site visits and participant interviews. The team will also review the racing success of greyhounds from the visited sites to provide additional information about the methods used.

### **Project scope item 2**

*Identify and recommend best practice rearing, socialisation education and training methods that exclusively use artificial and synthetic materials as a bait or lure (i.e. do not involve the use of live or dead animals or animal products)*

The AVA team will bring to the project an appreciation of the specific requirements for rearing physically sound, strong, athletic greyhounds. In addition, there will be a focus on defining the critical developmental, socialisation and learning periods of canines and how they can be managed to protect against the performance and welfare-limiting conditions of neophobia, fear and anxiety. Appropriate management of these critical periods will in turn enhance athletic performance.

The period from birth to naming has been identified as a significant period for "wastage" within the industry. The key factors of environmental management, critical learning periods and behavioural modification will be addressed in order to secure the well-being of juvenile greyhounds. Factors that support a stress-free transition to the rigours of racing and enhanced chances of adoption post career will be identified.

A review of current scientific literature will be married with the traditional laws of Pavlov, Skinner and Thorndike to provide recommendations for the most effective methods of lure

training. This review will look into reinforcement schedules and salience, the ability to generalise learnt behaviour and the effects of excitement, fear, anxiety and handler behaviour on the dogs' welfare and performance.

There are significant gaps in the evidence base published in the scientific literature on best practice in humane and effective rearing, socialization, education and training of greyhounds. Longer term recommendations in the project report will focus on the development of a more vibrant and humane greyhound racing industry through ongoing research and education. Specific recommendations will be made regarding the research required and the implementation of these strategies.

Education of all stakeholders regarding the impact of existing training methods on both racing and rehoming success and public acceptance of the industry is vital. The AVA team has a thorough understanding of both current and international training methods already widely in use. The report will include recommendations for immediate implementation in order to mitigate identified risks that may predispose to the use of live animal baits and lures.

### **Project scope item 3**

*Identify and recommend best practice rearing, socialisation, education and training methods that may include an acceptable level of animal content (i.e. professionally sourced skins) subject to appropriate approval, legal and policy constraints, ethical considerations and community support;*

The team is aware of GRNSW's view that imposition of an entirely artificial lure may cause disruption to parts of the industry, and require greyhounds to adapt to contemporary training methods.

The use of animal content in rearing and training will be addressed from various angles, including an ethical analysis (with consultation with a welfare and ethics committee), legal advice, policy fairness (with appropriate consultation with industry stakeholders) and ability to regulate. Using professionally sourced skins in training and education may impact on the eligibility of NSW greyhounds to race in states where a total ban on animal products is in place, and the implications of this will be examined.

The use of animal content will also be critically addressed as to potential advantages and disadvantages to the performance of the dog during its training and racing and with consideration of potential impacts on adoptability.

Ideally, attitude surveys of industry participants, punters and the general public towards the use of animal content to train greyhounds would provide a solid basis for sustainable decisions that would have acceptance into the future. However, the project timeframe and budget are unlikely to allow for this. The project report will make recommendations about how to incorporate broad attitudinal input into future industry reforms on these issues.

### **Project scope item 4**

*Identify and recommend lure operation systems that are used in best practice rearing, education and training methods*

The team will examine lures and lure operating systems currently in use in Australia and overseas and investigate recent changes and outcomes for lure systems in other states. Current practices will be investigated through site visits to rearing and education establishments, trial tracks and participant interviews. Assessment of age-appropriate lures and reward and reinforcement methods will be conducted. The relationship between lure

systems and the incidence of interference during races including marring and failing to pursue the lure will be investigated. The association between various lure systems and catching pen injuries will be assessed. A review of racetrack design and race distances will be linked to an investigation of correlation between lure systems and localised size and composition of greyhound populations.

### **Project scope items 5 and 6**

*For each recommended method, outline transitional and implementation requirements for industry wide adoption. Demonstrate how recommended methods can be implemented and support the continuation of the greyhound racing industry*

Setting out the funding and implementation challenges will be a key deliverable for the project. The implementation of reforms in other animal sporting industries globally will be investigated. The risks and benefits of recommendations and alternatives will be explored through case studies reported in the international literature and the media.

There are already some relevant education and training initiatives underway in Australia, for example by Racing Queensland and Racing Skills Victoria where completion of online training could be linked to licensing. These approaches will be explored and assessed for quality and suitability to the greyhound racing context.

The welfare implications of various rearing, socialisation, education and training methods will be assessed, including the risks of no change to current practice. The report will draw conclusions about how alternatives will improve overall welfare outcomes through the life of the animals and improve the public image of the industry.

Some aspects of these scope items may not be possible due to the time and budget restraints of this project. How the report's recommendations could be implemented will be an important next step once best-practice recommendations are made, but may need to be the subject of a separate project.

The implementation of the report's recommendations will certainly not be possible without wholesale cultural change and a robust change management process across the greyhound racing industry in NSW. To be effective, the cultural change and change management processes should be designed and executed by experts in these disciplines and should be the subject of a separate project.

### **Proposed methodology and approach**

Given the welfare and integrity issues plaguing the greyhound racing industry across Australia, the project team will work from a starting point that reform is essential if the industry is to survive and progress. The purpose of the project will be to identify which reforms are the most desirable from an integrity and animal welfare perspective, and then provide advice and information about how these may be implemented. Improving the welfare of greyhounds throughout their whole lifespan will be a principal consideration.

The study methodology will include meetings with Greyhound Racing NSW to gain a broad understanding of the project requirements, and any industry constraints that need to be considered.

A scientific literature review will provide an international perspective, with a particular focus

on the research and implementation undertaken in the UK and Ireland with racing greyhounds. Research from the broader field of canine behaviour and training of performance animals will be reviewed and applied to the research questions of this project.

Structured interviews with industry and other stakeholders will provide a broad range of perspectives on the research questions and possible solutions. These will be critical to consider the cultural challenges of changing practices within the greyhound racing industry.

Team members will also make some site visits to breeding and rearing businesses in New South Wales and other states to engage meaningfully with those who have most at stake. Structured interviews will explore attitudes, values, where participants seek advice and expertise, and how they see the way forward. The racing success of greyhounds from these sites will also be reviewed to provide an extra dimension of information to the participant interviews.

A draft report will be presented to GRNSW and feedback sought before the project report is finalised.

### **Project timeline**

Project inception meetings with GRNSW	Week beginning 11 May 2015
Initial project team meeting for project scoping and planning	Week beginning 11 May 2015
Structured interviews with stakeholders	18-22 May
Site visits to breeding and rearing businesses	18-22 May
Progress meeting with GRNSW	Week beginning 25 May 2015
Literature and information review completed	By 26 May
Draft report writing	26 May-14 June 2015
Draft report presentation to GRNSW	Week beginning 15 June 2015
Feedback and comments incorporated	By 28 June 2015
Final report to GRNSW	Week beginning 29 June 2015

### **Deliverables**

A report and presentation of project findings will be made to GRNSW. It is anticipated that the project will result in the beginnings of a comprehensive, evidence-based plan for GRNSW to adopt world's best practice in greyhound rearing, socialisation, education and training methods. Recommendations on implementation of best practice methods and future research priorities will be included.

### **Previous applicable experience in similar projects**

The AVA was invited in 2013 by the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) to provide a report on suitable temperament testing protocols for dogs suspected of being of a restricted breed. A team of behaviourists from our special interest group supported by AVA staff collaborated to produce a report on international best practice, making recommendations addressing the project brief.

Dr Jane McNicholl has recently completed a study (supported by Greyhound Racing SA) into heat stress in racing greyhounds. A report on the findings together with recommendations for future management of greyhounds participating in races and trials has been provided to Greyhound Racing SA.

Dr Gaille Perry was commissioned by RSPCA Australia in 2012 to develop a dog training

course for use nationally in all state RSPCA organisations. She is also currently working on developing a validated behavioural assessment tool with a team of international experts for RSPCA Australia for use in shelters across the country.

## **Expertise of personnel to be involved in the project**

**Dr Katrina Ward** BVSc, MANZCVS (Veterinary Behaviour) is the President of the Australian Veterinary Behaviour Interest Group and a Tasmanian veterinarian who graduated from the University of Queensland in 1992. She has worked in private practice, in Tasmania and England, initially in mixed practice and later focusing on small animal medicine and surgery. In 2008 Katrina earned her Membership of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists in the field of Veterinary Behaviour. She now works solely as a behavioural consultant and is excited about the opportunity to provide a professional assurance for the welfare of animals used for any purpose. She has both technical and communication skills, and a professional network from educational institutions, many of whom are involved in welfare and ethics.

**Dr Amanda Cole** BVSc, MANZCVS (Veterinary Behaviour) is the President Elect for the Australian Veterinary Behaviour Interest group. She graduated in 1999 and obtained her Membership of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists in Veterinary Behavioural Medicine in 2011. After working in private practice for 12 years, Amanda joined the RSPCA to co-head the NSW Veterinary Behaviour Department. Currently she runs a private behavioural consultancy business within the Sydney metropolitan area. During her time at the RSPCA as a behavioural veterinarian, she assessed the suitability of animals for adoption, co-ordinating foster care rehabilitation programs, assessing and treating animals from cruelty cases, providing education programs to improve animal welfare, and reviewing and amending current codes of practice within the RSPCA to improve the behavioural welfare of animals in their care. Amanda has witnessed first-hand the implications of inadequate socialisation, cruelty and the use of punishment in training animals on their welfare and adoptability. Amanda is passionate about the potential to contribute to a project that aims to address all aspects of a greyhound's life in the hope to improve its chances of a comfortable life within and past the racing circuit.

**Dr Jane McNicholl** MVB, graduated from Dublin University in 1973. She has practised as a veterinarian in mixed practice (companion animals, horses and livestock) in Ireland, Broken Hill and Kadina. As a lecturer at Roseworthy Agricultural College, Jane coordinated and delivered the Associate Diploma in horse husbandry and management, as well as developing and delivering short courses to horse and greyhound trainers and breeders. From 2000 to 2005 she was a Lecturer, Horse and Racing at the Veterinary and Applied Science Centre, Torrens Valley Technical and Further Education College and from 2005 to 2008 was employed as Lecturer in the School of Agriculture, Food and Wine, University of Adelaide where she developed and coordinated delivery of the course Companion Animal and Equine Studies, as well as assisting in coordinating and delivering the course Animal Behaviour, Welfare and Ethics to undergraduate students. Since 2009 she has been researching heat stress in racing greyhounds and teaching undergraduate students at the School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, University of Adelaide. In the past two years Jane has developed learning materials and delivered components of national certificates in racing (greyhound) to employees of Greyhound Racing SA, registered greyhound trainers and volunteers of the Greyhound Adoption Program SA. She works intermittently as a racetrack

veterinarian at greyhound racetracks in SA, has been a member of Australian Greyhound Veterinarians for over 10 years and presented at conferences both in Australia and overseas. Over thirty years Jane has bred, reared and trained scores of successful racing greyhounds (without live baiting).

**Dr Gaille Perry** BVSc, PhD, MANZCVS (Veterinary Behaviour) has had a distinguished career as a consultant in veterinary behavioural medicine, and in vocational education and training of workers in animal care industries. She is currently a Lecturer at the University of Queensland in veterinary behavioural medicine and Director of Studies for Delta Society (Australia). As Principal Teacher at Brisbane Institute of TAFE, Gaille trained animal care and management workers from 1993 to 2011. She has provided behavioural consulting services to RSPCA Australia, Animal Welfare League NSW, Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Industry, Halcyon Retirement Villages and Mater Children's Hospital. Gaille is a sought-after veterinary behaviour consultant and conference presenter, as well as a past president of the Australian Veterinary Behaviour Interest Group, a special interest group of the AVA. She is a member of the Sight Hound Club of Queensland, and has owned lure coursing sight hounds for more than 20 years.

### **Consulting experts**

The team's expertise will be augmented as required with consulting experts including the following.

**Dr Melanie Latter** BVSc (Hons 1), PhD, GCPA, MANZCVS (Animal Welfare) is the AVA's Veterinary Affairs Manager. She graduated from Sydney University in 1986 and gained her PhD in veterinary pathology in 1997. Melanie's career was initially focused on veterinary undergraduate teaching and research, before moving into the area of animal welfare science. She then worked as a Senior Policy Officer in Animal Welfare for the Queensland government and during this time completed a Graduate Certificate in Policy Analysis and attained membership of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists in animal welfare. Melanie has a long-standing commitment to science-based solutions that achieve sustainable improvements in animal welfare standards.

**Dr Leonie Finster** BVSc was a partner in a small animal and equine practice until her retirement in 2013. Her interest in greyhounds developed soon after commencing private practice. She examined racing dogs which were inappropriately fed, exercised and treated and set out to determine if treating them according to veterinary principles would produce better results. With a small team of racers (usually 2) who doubled as pets, Leonie achieved a remarkably high success rate. This then captured the attention of trainers, who sometimes heeded her advice, and she gained sound knowledge of the industry. Leonie is currently involved in updating the training protocol for Official Track Veterinarians for the Australian Greyhound Veterinarians, formulating a training package for new licencees for Racing Queensland, and was requested to provide information to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Greyhound Racing.

## Budget

Figures included here are exclusive of GST

Activity	Inputs	Number	Unit cost	Amount	SUBTOTALS
<b>Project inception</b>	Travel, accommodation, incidentals	3	\$ 1,600	\$ 4,800	
	Inception meetings with GRNSW	36	\$ 200	\$ 7,200	
	Initial team meeting	15	\$ 75	\$ 1,125	
	Project support	12	\$ 75	\$ 900	
					\$ 14,025
<b>Site visits</b>	Travel, accommodation, incidentals	1	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,600	
	Veterinarian time	24	\$ 200	\$ 4,800	
	Travel time	20	\$ 75	\$ 1,500	
	Project support	6	\$ 75	\$ 450	
					\$ 8,350
<b>Literature review and information gathering</b>	Veterinarian time	40	\$ 200	\$ 8,000	
	Project and research support	8	\$ 75	\$ 600	
	Research database access and incidentals	1	\$ 250	\$ 250	
					\$ 8,850
<b>Industry and stakeholder consultation</b>	Veterinarian time	15	\$ 200	\$ 3,000	
	Project support	3	\$ 75	\$ 225	
					\$ 3,225
<b>Progress meeting</b>	Veterinarian time	2	\$ 200	\$ 400	
	Project support	2	\$ 75	\$ 150	
					\$ 550
<b>Team teleconferences</b>	Veterinarian time	48	\$ 200	\$ 9,600	
	Project support	12	\$ 75	\$ 900	
					\$ 10,500
<b>Report writing (draft and final)</b>	Veterinarian time	80	\$ 200	\$ 16,000	
	Project support, editing, formatting	25	\$ 75	\$ 1,875	
					\$ 17,875
<b>Presentation of report to GRNSW</b>	Travel, accommodation, incidentals	3	\$ 1,600	\$ 4,800	
	Veterinarian time	12	\$ 200	\$ 2,400	
	Travel time	15	\$ 75	\$ 1,125	
	Project support	8	\$ 75	\$ 600	
					\$ 8,925
<b>Administration and project management</b>	AVA on-costs - finances, catering, venue provision	1	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	
					\$ 2,500
			<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 74,800</b>