

# Things You Need to Know Pre-Adoption



## Prepare to Bring Your Retired Racer Home

Now that you've been approved to adopt a retired racer from MSGAO, do yourself and your Greyhound a huge favor and learn about ex-racers and find out what to expect before you bring one home. These books will help you handle almost any situation and answer your questions.

- Adopting the Racing Greyhound (third edition) by Cynthia A. Branigan
- Retired Racing Greyhounds for Dummies by Lee Livingood
- Greyhounds: A Complete Pet Owner's Manual by D. Caroline Coile

## Selecting Your New Best Friend

Don't get hung up on wanting a particular color or gender of Greyhound. Come to the adoption kennel and take a few dogs out for a test in the kennel yard. Sometimes magic happens and a particular dog will pick you! Also, if you have a resident dog, please bring him to the kennel to help select your hound. Compatibility is crucial!

## Supplies You'll Need

**ID Tag:** Buy a pet ID tag engraved with your dog's name, your name, address and phone number. This is a very simple yet important task to do which helps to ensure that your Greyhound be found if lost. We also recommend getting your pet micro-chipped, but an ID tag that is **always** on your pet is your best protection.

**Crates/Gates:** Borrow or buy an extra-large dog crate (48" L x 30" W x 35" H) or a few baby or dog gates to create a dog-safe area or room for your new Greyhound.

The crate eases the transition from racing dog to trusted pet. Use it for the first week or two, until you feel that the new Greyhound has learned your house rules and can be trusted in your home unsupervised. Some Greyhounds can't stand being crated while some love their crates and will continue to use them as a "den" to rest and get away from busy family life.

If you are crating your Greyhound for hours at a time during the day, then it is not advisable to crate your Greyhound all night, too. After your Greyhound is house broken (which shouldn't take long at all), try to transition him from being crated all the time, he will be happier.

Baby or dog gates are an inexpensive and very useful way to keep your newly adopted Greyhound confined to a "dog-proofed" safe area or room of your home during the house-breaking period or while you are temporarily away from the home. Until your new Greyhound is house-trained and reliable home alone, it's easier to buy a few baby gates than it is to buy new carpet.

### Checklist

- Extra-large crate
- Non-retractable leash (bring with you when picking up your new Greyhound)
- Identification tags
- Food and water bowls, preferably raised
- Large dog bed
- Soft squeaky toys
- Treats (to be used sparingly)
- Brush (Zoom Groom or FURminator)

### Optional

- Coat for cold weather
- Pet odor remover (in case of accidents)
- Kong (keeps your Greyhound entertained while you are away)
- Shampoo
- Toenail clippers
- Lots of martingale collars

**Food:** Buy high-quality, premium dry dog kibble that lists meat as the first, second or at least the third ingredient. We recommend Costco's grain-free foods.

**Raised Bowls:** Buy/make a raised food and water bowl station. Greyhounds are very tall and can eat their food more easily from a raised food dish (12" to 16" high). These can be bought online or at local pet supply stores. We recommend raised food/water bowls as it is thought that dogs don't ingest as much air with their food from a raised bowl and this can help to avoid bloat (flipping of the stomach — which is deadly and can kill a dog in 20 minutes or less). Bloat is more common in deep-chested dog breeds. Also, as your Greyhound ages, it becomes much more difficult for him/her to bend over to eat from bowls on the floor.

One of the most important methods to prevent bloat is to simply wait at least 30 minutes after your Greyhound eats before letting him run hard or play hard; and to wait at least 30 minutes after he has run or exercised hard before feeding him.

**Bed:** Buy a thick, cushioned dog bed. You can use a few thick folded blankets, thick folded comforters, or a folded sleeping bag also. Since Greyhounds have very little body fat, they require thick, soft, padded beds in order to avoid getting pressure sores and to be comfortable on the floor. Even if you have carpeted floors, get a dog bed.

**Toys:** Buy some soft dog toys. Greyhounds prefer plush fleece toys and most just go wild for the squeaky ones!

**Brush:** Buy a very soft bristle grooming brush. One easy way to bond with your new Greyhound is to groom him. Since Greyhounds have very thin fur coats and sensitive, thin skin use a very soft bristle brush that will not scratch his skin. Test the brush out on your inner arm, if it leaves scratches on your skin, it will on your Greyhound's skin too. So be sure to get a very soft brush.

**Coat:** Buy a coat made specifically for Greyhounds. A Greyhound's lack of significant body fat causes them to chill very easily. A winter coat keeps Greyhound warm and comfortable in cold weather while outside (below freezing). A large or extra-large dog coat that is not made specifically for a Greyhound's body shape will NOT fit your Greyhound.

**Toothbrush:** Buy dog tooth paste and a dog tooth brush. NEVER use human tooth paste for your dog! Fluoride found in human tooth paste is poisonous and your dog can not spit it out of his mouth and will get very ill ingesting it.

Greyhounds tend to have periodontal and dental problems and many even lose teeth if you do not have them professionally cleaned by a vet once a year. All our Greyhounds have their teeth professionally cleaned before they are placed in forever homes.

## **Before the Big Day**

**Security Check:** Before the big day, purchase the supplies above and check your fencing, especially your gates. Most Greyhound owners place paddle-locks on their gates to be sure they are not left open by the meter reader, kids, etc. The easiest way to lose your Greyhound is by someone leaving the gate open. You must be diligent regarding keeping all of your gates shut when you let your Greyhound out into your yard!

**House Rules:** Greyhounds need order and are extremely routine-oriented. We recommend working out your house rules and dog-care schedule in advance among the human members of your household, such as:

- Who will let the dog out into the fenced yard or walk the dog first thing in the morning?
- Who will feed him in the morning and at night?
- Will your Greyhound be allowed on the couch or beds?
- Will he be crated or baby gated?

**New Name or Not:** Often new families ask about changing the Greyhound's kennel name. If you want to, it's fine. Your new Greyhound will learn his new name quickly if it's consistently used for a week or so. Don't start using different nicknames just yet until he learns his new name first. It is in no way traumatic to the Greyhound to change his name. So, if you want to, just do it and have everyone in contact with your new Greyhound use his new name consistently.

**The Car Ride Home:** Despite your joy at adopting your new Greyhound (and after a few enthusiastic hugs and kisses), you should be calm and firm. Greyhounds are usually good travelers, and will normally settle right down when the car ride begins. Still it is a good idea to plan on two adults (leave the kids at home) to bring your new Greyhound home. An over-enthusiastic Greyhound who decides to "help" the car driver by jumping in your lap, could be a problem. Talk to him in a calm, low voice as you travel home. Avoid playing the car radio or having too many people with you when you pick him up.

## **Homecoming**

When your Greyhound arrives, he will be excited, and most likely anxious, about his new home. This stress can take the form of panting and pacing, housebreaking accidents and/or gastric upset in the form of gas, vomiting or diarrhea. Don't worry if your new Greyhound suddenly seems a little "home sick" for the dogs and staff at the adoption kennel, or acts nervous. He is not sure what is going to happen to him next. He feels like a guest in your home--is he allowed on the furniture? How should he tell you he needs to go out? It is very confusing for him in the beginning. Don't invite the relatives or the neighborhood over to meet him just yet. He will need time to rest, and digest all these new experiences.

Use common sense. Don't allow your Greyhound to feel overwhelmed, or to get into situations that might be dangerous to him. Talk to him in a calm friendly manor and encourage, don't force. Correct him, but don't punish. Tomorrow is another day, and after a good rest, he will probably wake up refreshed, tail wagging, and ready for new adventures.

**Spend Time with Your Greyhound:** Take some time off work or try and arrange the arrival of your new Greyhound for a weekend (or both). The more time you spend with your new Greyhound in the beginning, the shorter his/her break-in period will be. Your Greyhound will be stressed and will look to you for reassurance by following you around from room to room. He also needs to spend the first few days with you in order to learn to trust you, get on your schedule, and start to learn the house rules.

**Walk Him/Her Before Going Inside:** When you bring your new Greyhound home, be prepared to leash-walk him (even in a fenced yard) outside for at least 10-15 minutes or until he relieves himself. Let him get familiar by sniffing and becoming acquainted with all the smells associated with your yard. The

combination of the car ride home, coupled with all the excitement of a new family and home will cause him to have to relieve himself more often. Give him plenty of opportunities in the beginning. If you have a special place in your yard you wish him to use for urination and elimination, encourage him to go in that area (and then praise him when he does.)

If your new Greyhound is a male, he will most likely want to "mark" his new territory (especially if he detects there are or have been dogs living here previously.) This is his way of making himself at home and should only occur outside. Females often exhibit "marking" behavior too.

**Keep Him/Her on Leash When Entering Your Home:** A male may still "mark" a doorway, plant or chair when he first walks in your home. This is out of nervousness (or he may smell remnants of another dog), so it is best to keep him on the leash when first bringing him inside. If he starts to lift his leg on something, give him a short jerk on the leash and tell him "No," and he should stop immediately. Then take him outside and when he relieves himself, give him tons of praise.

Remember, a female Greyhound may try to "mark" in your home too, and they give even less indicator signals that they are about to squat.

**The Umbilical Cord Method:** Remember, your new Greyhound cannot make a mess or have an accident in your house if you watch him/her closely by keeping him in the room with you. The first day you bring your Greyhound home, use a 4- to 6-foot flexible leash and attach one end to your belt loop on your pants and the other end to your Greyhound's Martingale collar. This is called the "umbilical cord" method and is successful because your dog can not do anything or go anywhere in your home without you knowing about it. During this first day or two, you are able to safely show your new Greyhound your home, introduce him to the house rules, and successfully reinforce house breaking rules.

*This information was adapted from the Greyhound Care Manual compiled & written by Marnie Grosz of Recycled Racers Inc - © Copyright 2003.*