

A Registration Appeal

Many of us who show the classic AKC Greyhound have become increasingly concerned about the influx of NGA-bred Greyhounds into the show ring and the consequences which will follow in upcoming decades.

Prior to ten to fifteen years ago, very few racing-bred Greyhounds survived to be adopted. Within the last decade, however, many rescue groups have been formed by caring people who have greatly increased the number of NGA Greyhounds being saved. Apparently last year 18,000 NGA Greyhounds were placed. While most of the rescued Greyhounds are neutered and make wonderful pets, some are not neutered and are shown and even bred from. If only one percent of that population is exhibited, they will outnumber classic AKC Greyhounds in the ring. The total registration of AKC Greyhounds is roughly one-half of one percent of the NGA registry each year. How many other AKC breeds are faced with such an overwhelming population discrepancy?

None of the NGA dogs have ever been bred to the AKC standard. Contrary to popular opinion, they have not been bred for coursing purposes nor for stamina. They have not been bred for top health nor for longevity. The sole aim of their breeders was to create explosive speed over a relatively short, relatively smooth oval track. The two strains have been bred for different purposes for over 80 years although they stem from the same original stock. In 80 years many changes have taken place, and the breeding populations are now substantially different. Most breeders agree that the typical NGA dog exhibits a snipier, shorter muzzle, a broader back skull, a shorter, thicker neck, a shallower, broader chest, less angulation, a flatter top line and different emphasis on muscle type. However, more and more people seem to want to show NGA-bred Greyhounds, yet very few judges are willing to withhold ribbons, and many of these dogs are being finished by competing with their own kind via "built" majors. It may take decades, but it will ultimately influence the breed in a negative way.

Many of the NGA dogs have been adopted by coursing enthusiasts. For quite some time, because these individuals acquired dogs which other people had already trained and conditioned from a young age to chase a lure at speed, their retired racers were more successful in coursing events than the typical AKC Greyhounds, which are almost always raised without this same training and conditioning. This led many of the coursing fans to feel that the NGA strain was the "functional" strain. The coursing enthusiasts in recent years have been extremely vocal and militant in their criticisms of the AKC Greyhound and have widely publicized their prejudices, often influencing performance-oriented judges. However, as more and more AKC-bred Greyhounds are shown successfully at coursing events, it is being noted that they have more stamina, are less prone to injury, and while they may not show explosive speed, they usually are still running at the end of multiple-day events. Just a few years ago, the NGA coursing enthusiasts insisted that no Greyhound as tall as 30" could successfully compete. Since that time, that has been proven incorrect. Many AKC-bred Greyhounds have improved their performance as they gain experience each time they run. If these same dogs had been given the same training and conditioning from a young age as the NGA stock, their records would be even more impressive.

Genetic diversity for health reasons has also been put forth as a necessity for keeping the stud book open to NGA dogs. This is a totally mistaken argument. Because the majority of these Greyhounds were destroyed by five years of age until about ten years ago when the rescue groups began saving a substantial number of lives, very few of the NGA dogs lived beyond that. This situation existed through a period of about 80 years. This is 80 years of breeding for speed without regard to anything else: not conformation; not health; not longevity. Now it has been noted that NGA dogs have an inordinate amount of osteosarcomas and other cancers plus many other health problems, many showing up before middle age. While some individuals point fingers at 3D meat for this problem, it seems very likely that 80 years of breeding with only speed in mind may be the true root of the situation.

Many of us who care about the classic AKC Greyhound are worried about the potential for deterioration in quality over the next decades by having an open stud book. We want to exclude the NGA-bred Greyhound from the AKC Greyhound stud book in order to maintain quality and integrity of the breed so that we do not lose our classic AKC Greyhound.

Lois T. Bires
Baden, Pennsylvania 

I have been a member of the Greyhound Club of America since 1976. My efforts to educate myself regarding the breed span the last thirty-three years. I would like to address the issue of the AKC registering NGA dogs.

Allowing NGA dogs to be registered with the American Kennel Club defeats the efforts of AKC Greyhound breeders of the last 100 years. It makes no sense for the careful efforts of dedicated AKC breeders of the last century studying dogs, pedigrees and genetics and striving to breed to the AKC standard to be discarded. AKC Greyhound breeders have fostered and nurtured an excellent breed and brought it into the 21st century astonishingly free of genetic defects. The AKC Greyhound needs no infusion of 'new blood' from the NGA dog, which would amount to cross breeding.

In the intermittent periods in the past 100 years when the AKC has allowed NGA dogs to be registered, no NGA dog has made a contribution to the betterment of the breed. The NGA dog has never been bred with a thought to the AKC standard. The vocal group who seek AKC registration of NGA dogs are not dog breeders. They have no knowledge of NGA genetics or AKC Greyhound genetics. They seek the short cut of accessing a cheap, plentiful supply of dogs to show (or lure course) - not the serious, dedicated path of the purebred dog breeder.

If the genetic welfare of the AKC Greyhound were an issue,

By Merry Lewis Rainey

the NGA proponents should be seeking to introduce the best of the NGA dogs. Instead, they seek to introduce the culls from the NGA - animals which are rejects from NGA breeding and racing for reasons of temperament, ability, health or genetic defect.

The arguments of the NGA proponents are spurious. Perhaps the true issue at stake is showing versus breeding. The AKC would forsake its own principles if it abandoned the efforts of the people who have created and maintained the AKC Greyhound. It is clear the decision of the AKC must be to terminate registration of NGA dogs as AKC Greyhounds. It is a paradox that humane efforts to save thousands of discarded NGA dogs now threaten the integrity of the numerically small, but cherished, AKC Greyhound.

There is no point in arguing which is the 'true' Greyhound, any more than arguing which is the 'true' God. Accept the facts — there are (at least) two breeds of dogs

- 1) AKC Greyhounds and
- 2) NGA dogs

which have been bred to different standards long enough to constitute two separate breeds.

The sport of dogs encompasses many human aspects. True breeders are often not vocal. They pursue a quiet lifetime commitment to their breed, often, sadly, not even members of their breed clubs, shunning politics, power, published diatribes and media promotion. Some people prefer the drama of showing, often switching breeds. They provide the sport with drama and color. There are also promoters, pontificators and the self serving. Some seek dignity for themselves through the virtues of their dogs.

To a true dog breeder, function is not the sole criteria. True dog breeders add the aesthetic bar of beauty to the function test.

The AKC Greyhound has suffered in recent years by fanciers attempting to lower the standard to the plain test of function. The volume of the NGA dogs, bred for function only, has increased the pressure to lower the AKC standard.

If proponents of the NGA dogs are determined to show at AKC events, they should seek registry as a separate breed. 🐕

By Maureen Lucas

YET MORE ON GREYHOUNDS

While it is tempting to present one's personal beliefs as Universal Truths, Gail Burnham's words against closing the AKC Greyhound Stud Book to dogs of racing origin (*Dog News*, May 25, 2001) demonstrate the crucial difference between an individual opinion and contemporary reality. The situation facing the AKC Greyhound is unique in the dog fancy. This is not opinion—statistics prove this. According to GREY2K USA, "in 1999, approximately 27,000 Greyhounds entered the racing system....approximately 12,000 "retired" dogs were rescued and adopted." It's easy to see how thoroughly overshadowed the mere 146 AKC Greyhounds registered that same year are. It doesn't require Ms. Burnham's history lessons to do the math—27,000 or 12,000 versus 146!! The dog fancy, the racing industry and the AKC Greyhound population have all changed, like most things, in the last 40 years since the Stud Book was opened. It is time for the policy of Greyhound Club of America and the AKC to come into the present and protect the AKC Greyhound.

When the Stud Book was reopened to include Greyhounds of racing origin (NGA dogs), it was done to serve and protect a small breed. It seemed the tiny AKC Greyhound population of that day could easily be decimated by a catastrophic illness or genetic problem. There was much more homogeneity in the Greyhound population of 40 years ago, and consequently many Greyhounds were closely related and went back to a handful of popular sires of the day. Racing, too, was different then, and hardly the giant, multi-million dollar, hired-lobbyist industry it has become today.

The most important difference on the contemporary scene is the massive and popular effort to rescue as many former racing dogs as possible into the general population. Forty years ago, or even ten, one did not see racing dogs almost everywhere in any town in America. Intense critical media scrutiny of the racing industry and its massive destruction of thousands of dogs each year led to an awakening of a public that had never wondered what happened to all those dogs after they raced. Adoption programs began in the 1980's, and all over the country one began seeing former racers now enjoying lives as pets.

It's a grand thing to save a dog's life. Is it possible there might also be negative consequences as well? In the case of the Greyhound, the answer is yes, yes, yes. First, ask an employee of a county animal shelter what they think of Greyhound adoption. Odds are good they will privately, off-record, tell you that each racing dog adopted by a Good Samaritan who wants to "save a life" represents a not-so-recognizable local dog who was euthanized at the shelter because the home it might have gone to took a former racer instead as their new pet. At the local shelter here, the director said each time she sees a Greyhound walking around town, she sees the face of a mixed breed dog she had to put to sleep. She points out that North Carolina mercifully does not have Greyhound racing, so we are essentially importing these dogs from other states to rescue in place of our own local dogs in need of adoption. Which life was saved??

Secondly, with the national efforts to rescue racing dogs, popular sentiment has changed.

Continued on page 136

YET MORE ON GREYHOUNDS

Continued from page 70

Fifteen years ago, people would stop me on the street as I walked one of my champion Greyhounds and ask me if I'd heard the horrible news about how many racers are destroyed each year. They were shocked, appalled, and vowed never to attend another race. Now, however, people stop me to praise me for "saving a life". Our shelter director told me she believes some people need the public praise they garner for saving a Greyhound, especially in our athlete-obsessed culture, as opposed to quietly, anonymously adopting a nondescript Benji-type dog from the shelter. Ironically, adoption has eased the critical scrutiny of the racing industry. I am adamantly pro-adoption, and have participated in it for years. But the unpleasant truth is that now people regularly rush up to inform me cheerfully that "they used to kill all of those dogs after they raced, but now they find good homes for all of them!" How tragically untrue.

Finally, in the case of closing the AKC Stud Book, comes a third consequence of current reality in NGA rescue. Some of the former racers who have not made the grade on the race track or have met injuries there, are coming into the pet population un-neutered. While most adoption agencies insist on spay-neuter, some are more interested in "saving lives" in volume, and release dogs quickly into private hands as pets. Some of these dogs find their way into homes where the new owners become introduced to dog sports. Some of these rescued racers are shown. In such a small numbers breed, there are regions of the country in which 4 Greyhounds constitutes a major. Some of the racers have professional handlers, and in some cases are shown against their own puppies to become champions. So there is a new champion, whose siblings and parents are unknown to the owner of the new champion, since those related racing dogs are probably long dead. We must remember that this dog would have been kept at the track if it were considered a worthy specimen for breeding and racing, and not given away as excess baggage from a kennel. Sound like good AKC show and breeding potential?? In the last five years for which statistics are available, the NGA registered 33,183 litters, and 190,168 individual racing dogs. The AKC population was 165 litters and 1055 dogs. The numbers—and the discrepancy—are not just my opinion, they are harsh and frightening reality.

Some sporting breeds also face a split in their breed's population, with field dogs being quite different from show specimens. However, Golden Retrievers, for instance, are a large enough breed in numbers that even the best professional handler would be hard put to finish a field dog the show ring. The English Setter has a distinct divide in the breed between show and field types. The field folks enjoy and take pride in what they do, and don't venture into the show ring. They breed for the field, they compete in the field and they stay in the field. English Setters even have a separate registry for Field Dogs. This is quite different from novices who get rescue Greyhounds and start participating in the show ring. Two people with two dogs each can make majors and finish 4 dogs. Knowledgeable judges don't need to look in an ear or a crystal ball to see the difference between field type and show type, or racing type and show type. Those differences are pronounced and many, and no one with an eye for a dog would have to be surreptitiously looking for clues, as Ms. Burnham suggests. It is imperative to remember that NGA Greyhounds are bred for the race track, and for the single standard of going a short distance in one direction with blinding speed. ALL AKC dogs are to be bred to the written standards of their own breeds. The theory is supposed to be that the dog is judged in accordance with their own standard. The NGA dog was never bred to the AKC standard, nor to any other written standard, only to speed. That the AKC's brief and generous standard sometimes coincidentally encompasses a track dog does not mean that dog was ever bred to comply with it! Why are the Greyhound ring and standard to include dogs who were **never** bred to any written standard? GCA is **not** the parent club of racing dogs! If NGA dogs are to be shown and bred, there should be a written standard that describes a dog constructed to run on oval tracks after artificial lures in one direction in predictable circumstances at great speeds. This is dramatically different than the historic purpose of the coursing, hunting Greyhound running in pursuit of various types and sizes of live game in changing directions at varying speeds on different terrain, and consequently would represent a different kind of dog. Then and only then could NGA Greyhounds be evaluated fairly and properly in the show ring as specimens compared to their own written standard and judged as such. I question neither the integrity of NGA's registries or pedigrees. Nor do I question that Smooth Collies and Rough Collies are both pure-bred Collies, but also different kinds of Collies that share the name. Ms. Burnham does not judge very often, but surely is in the ring enough to know that more than a few breeds have types and varieties, but one shared name. Why not two Greyhounds? And if they are to be a new AKC breed, why not show and

Continued on page 140

YET MORE ON GREYHOUNDS

Continued from page 136

breed the best of the track dogs, and not the cast offs? And the new breed can be called exactly what it is, Racing Greyhounds.

Another important change on the contemporary scene is the increased ease in importing and breeding to dogs outside the US. It was a different matter four decades ago when Mr. Batten worried about the effect of a catastrophic development in the small AKC Greyhound population. That imagined, potential catastrophe has not come to pass in 40 years, thank goodness. Today, frozen and chilled semen have made it easy to breed to dogs all over the world, increasing gene pools for all breeds, and creating exciting opportunities, especially in small numbers breeds with limited options. Before anyone would need to turn to an unfamiliar (or mainly dead) track population, we could turn to show-bred.

Greyhounds and fellow Greyhound breeders who also breed to written standards and classic type all over the world. At recent GCA specialties, the catalogs reveal both dogs in the ring as well as dogs bred from Greyhounds from Australia, England, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia, and France. At the World Show in Finland a few years ago, I witnessed the same thing-and add to the geographic diversity there dogs from Russia, Italy and Denmark. At the World Show, I showed a dog we sent to Finland, who was sired by our dog whose grandfather was from Sweden, who himself has a multiple BIS winning son in Australia. The potentially worrisome limitations of the past simply no longer exist as Greyhounds have truly become quite an international breed. Additionally, as the former racing dogs are now aging as pets of the general public for the first time (for decades they were quietly disposed of and long-dead by what should have been their old age), it seems that they have specific and common health problems in *their* ranks. Vets who care for numbers of former track dog pets are seeing astonishing amounts of osteosarcoma in the older dogs. Ask vets how many of the 16 year old racers Ms. Burnham cites they treat, versus how many they see with bone cancer at seven years of age.

Ms. Burnham's statement that "the majority of performance Greyhounds in obedience, agility and lure coursing are racing bred dogs" is simplistic in its duplicity. More to the point, the majority of **all** Greyhounds are racing bred! Using Gail's own statistics of 30,000 racers born per year versus 200 AKC puppies per year, the NGA dogs will predominate at performance events not by superior talent or exceptional virtue, but by sheer numbers! Why would closing the Stud Book be "a slap in the face to exhibitors of ex-racing dogs" in obedience or lure coursing when they could compete with ILP numbers just as surely as any proud owners do with non-show specimens in any other breed?

Surely Ms. Burnham can not expect the issue as important as closing the Stud Book to hinge on the class win of one Greyhound with an NGA dam at one show 8 years ago?? This history lesson in reverse (these dogs are so virtuous that they can win once a decade?) might have been more complete had Gail added that this prestigious win was in a class of three, and that her own dogs were in the pedigree. As for the English Kennel Club's policy, and English breed experts, I quote Mr. Ian Bond, also a successful Greyhound breeder and international judge, when he wrote in support of closing the AKC Stud Book, "our show system, whereby a dog may only become a champion by gaining three Challenge Certificates competed for against all other dogs (including champions), has to date ensured that no racing bred dog has ever won a major show award."

I can agree with Ms. Burnham that our breed is indeed tiny, our parent club is small and we have voted on this issue in the past. GCA also recently voted again on designation of National Specialties, and those votes came *months*, not years apart! The majority of members of GCA have signed a petition to close the Stud Book. People should rescue NGA dogs, course them, train them for obedience and agility and cherish them. What they should **not** do is call them show dogs, hijack the AKC standard or breed more dogs when there are tens of thousands "to save", and active, experienced NGA breeders who continue to breed for the tracks.

When I became part of a group of GCA members working to close the Stud Book, one of the first things I did was contact Mr. Stanley Petter. "Hi", as some of us know him, is one of the longest serving members of GCA, and it was he who made the proposal to open the Stud Book in 1960. In light of current reality, I asked him to not only support our effort, but to write a letter describing how the policy had come to pass. I conclude with the words of the man who many years ago asked that the Stud Book be opened. Hi is not the only one who sees that times have changed, and to protect the AKC Greyhound, we must change with them. 🐕

BY LINDA T. CARLSON

I feel that I have to share my response to Gail Burnham's recent letter and petitions for constitutional amendments. I could not let her characterizations and propagandistic version of the situation of the board and the vote on closing the stud book go without rebuttal. A few of you have experienced my vocal opposition on a greyhound list and will have heard much of this before. My apologies to you for the repetition.

Throughout her letter Ms. Burnham speaks as though she could see into the minds and souls of the Board members. She characterizes the actions of the board, and specifically Rose Mary Conner and June Matarazzo, as being self-serving and power-grabbing. She paints a negative picture of the proceedings of the Board Meeting at the Western Specialty. Though she has since said that she 'overheard' some of the proceedings from the lobby below, she was not an acknowledged visitor/guest to the meeting that she seems to know so intimately. There is little of truth and substance in her letter when one looks critically at its content.

In the first paragraph she speaks of Rose Mary and June contacting the AKC without the knowledge of the board First, since they are Board members, at least two of the Board knew of the letter. Second, this is their (and anyone else's) right to do. If I was (God forbid!) voted to serve on the Board I would do the same. This club has been so divisive on nearly every issue that it behooves anyone who is expected to act on behalf of the membership to get very specific direction on procedure from the AKC. The ladies' actions are twisted by implications that they were concerned about the membership having too much to say about club business—not because of procedural problems that this brings up with the AKC, but from some kind of wish for unbridled power. To serve her point, Ms. Burnham includes a letter (though it is her recreation, not an actual copy) from Mr. Liosis, the Director of Club Relations for the AKC. She then says she 'disagrees' with him. I allow that she has every right to disagree, but in procedural questions I would suggest that the AKC is more likely to agree with Mr. Liosis than Ms. Burnham. When the GCA is directed in procedural matters by the AKC, it is our responsibility to follow their guidelines. As a parent club the GCA must carry on business in a very specific manner. Ms. Burnham would like us to think that with a membership of only around 150 we should have different rules than a club of, say, 1500. Is the AKC expected to make several versions of their procedures, just because the parent clubs are of different sizes?

In her version of a meeting of the membership under the AKC's guidelines Ms. Burnham sees the members not being able to participate in the proceedings. There is nothing to say that at a General Meeting the members can't speak, express concerns, or ask questions. But when the participation is outside our procedural directions, as when Ms. Burnham called for a general vote at the Western meeting, it must not be acted upon, given the serious repercussions to the GCA. Let me re-visit Ms. Burnham's letter where she mentions,

Continued on page 160

Continued from page 78

“active participation by the general membership in making motions at the general membership meetings and voting on them both at those meetings and by mail ballots to the entire membership”. Last year there was a vote by the general membership on the designation of the National Specialty. The majority of the 100—some members voted that the Eastern would be the National Specialty. At the Western there was great dissatisfaction noted by the members present (not nearly the 100 that had originally voted). A motion was made to have a rotating specialty—between the Eastern and the Western. Another motion was made to include the Southern. This motion was seconded and a vote was held. The outcome of this vote was to have a National Specialty that rotated between the three regions. The majority vote was overturned by a minority vote. If the open voting practices proposed by Ms. Burnham’s petition are adopted, the scenario just described would potentially be the norm. This, I believe, would truly mean the disenfranchisement of the majority of the club members.

As to the closing of the stud book, again the vote by the Board is characterized as sneaky and underhanded. The circumstances of the meeting and the vote were only partially represented, and again, negatively characterized. She neglects to mention that the vote was a 6-to-1 majority. Even if the two absent voting members had been present and dissenting, the vote would still have been a majority for closure of the stud book. No matter how negatively Ms. Burnham characterizes the intentions of the Board, it remains their job to vote on all issues outside those designated by the AKC for the general membership. If the majority does not concur with the Board’s vote, it is well with the power of the membership to call for a vote. But it must first be ascertained, through a petition signed by the majority of members, that the majority was not represented. This precludes the possibility of a minority overturning the will of the majority, as with the illegal vote on the Specialty designation mentioned above. Unfortunately, in the past, correct procedures have been overlooked in favor of calming the waters.

Ms. Burnham apparently looked into the minds of the Board and saw that they were putting this vote up as a ‘test case’ for ultimate power. Though I strongly object to the continual characterizations of people she considers ‘the opposition (to the point of saying that they, the opposition, “lie a lot”’, and though I don’t see anything that indicates that this is any kind of test, I would have to say that I hope that the Board continues to hold their ground and not give in to the opposition of disgruntled members. The AKC has very specific guidelines that we, as a parent club, are obliged to follow. The members of this Board seem to be, with the assistance of the Director of Club Relations, trying to proceed on the best course to keep our relationship with the AKC on a good footing. At the Western meeting they did not allow a motion by Ms. Burnham for a general vote. It was she who insisted on being held out of order. After doing as she asked, the membership was asked if anyone had anything further to say— and open invitation. No one voiced any questions. There was no outcry of protest. Is it possible that the Board had, indeed, voted the will of the majority? If voting on every issue is of such importance to Ms. Burnham, she should devote her energies to local or regional clubs.

Continued on page 164

Continued from page 160

Both the AKC and Roberts' Rules specify that national organizations are Board driven, whereas local and regional clubs have members in relatively close proximity who are able to participate in running the club.

I would ask you to consider this. If the vote on the stud book had gone the way Ms. Burnham would have liked, do you think that she would still have been up in arms about the 'disenfranchisement of the membership'? I doubt it. I believe that this attempt to change the constitution is a way to keep open the possibility for the minority to overturn a vote of the majority, as represented by a vote of the elected Board. No matter who might vote at a General Meeting, we as members are only truly represented by the people we elect (or by our own vote if we are present). This Board was glowingly praised by Ms. Burnham in a letter to the membership. They were then characterized as fair-minded and able to work together. Now, when indeed they are very unified of purpose, as indicated by the 6-1 vote, they are to be reviled.

It is up to us as members to consider very carefully whom we vote into positions on the Board. We can support candidates we think will be good with letters or phone calls. And once elected we can communicate our opinions to the members and pay attention to their votes. If, during the course of an individual's participation on the Board we disagree with the majority of their votes, we can elect others into office with the next election. None of us will agree on all the issues all the time. But the people that are voted into office should not be slandered and reviled when they do not represent one individual's choice.

Please consider carefully how these events have been represented by Ms. Burnham. She characterizes and twists and assumes the intentions of the Board. She proposes paths that can lead the GCA into more and more procedural difficulties with the AKC. She would have you discount the opinion of Mr. Liosis because she disagrees with him. She chooses to call a voted by the elected Board 'a power grab'. Why or how could they grab power that we gave them, by virtue of voting them onto the Board. Not everyone received Ms. Burnham's letter. But if you did, please read it again very carefully. Read the letter that she quotes from Mr. Liosis. It is not the Board that decides what they are or are not to vote on—it is right there in black and white with the vast majority of votes falling to the Board, as our representatives. Before you write to the AKC, and it certainly is our right to do so, consider who really is working in our best interest, the Board of Directors, for whom the majority voted, or one unhappy member? Whether or not you agree with the vote on the stud book, is it better for the few members able to attend meetings to overturn the vote of our representatives? That is for you to decide for yourself. I prefer to think that if the Board is voted for by the majority, they will represent that majority in the majority of their votes.

I thank you for your time and patience in wading through this. My intent is not to direct your choices in any way. I respect others too much to try to make up their minds for them. I only want each of us to think for ourselves and not be swayed by false portrayals of individuals and their motives. I do not want the GCA's finances and energies wasted on unnecessary and procedurally incorrect votes. Please give this matter some clear and individual thought. 🐕