Dog track promoters have stepped up their efforts to establish new greyhound race tracks throughout the United States. HSUS is concerned that these efforts be no less up in efforts to inform humanitarian of the powerful and well-financed campaigns to legalize dog racing in many states.

Dog racing is one of America's cruelst spectator events, largely because of the training methods used, which include the chasing and tearing apart of live rabbit lures. Greyhounds, the dogs used in professional racing, are trained for the track in an activity called coursing. In coursing a live rabbit is set free in an enclosed field and two or more young, hungry dogs are released to chase it. The rabbit zigzags about the enclosure with little chance of escape. When caught, the rabbit is torn apart and man­gled by the dogs.

After five or six coursings the dog is advanced to the schooling track where a live rabbit is hung by its back legs to a mechanical lure, with its head dangling inches from the ground. The lure is whipped around the track with the dogs near the finish line they are al­lowed to chase the helpless rabbit. If the rabbit is not killed by the first dog of the pack it is pulled around the track again with fresh dogs in pursuit. By this time dogs and trainers believe the taste of fresh blood excites the dog into chasing the lure with more determina­tion than ever before, even after being trained on dead bait. Although most owners and trainers will not admit it, virtually all racing dogs are trained with live rabbits. Ben Jacques, an ex-harness driver who claims to have retired after training greyhounds in California and requires that farms be set up for retired racing dogs near the finish line they are al­lowed to chase the helpless rabbit. If the rabbit is not killed by the first dog of the pack it is pulled around the track again with fresh dogs in pursuit. By this time dogs and trainers believe the taste of fresh blood excites the dog into chasing the lure with more determina­tion than ever before, even after being trained on dead bait. Although most owners and trainers will not admit it, virtually all racing dogs are trained with live rabbits. Ben Jacques, an ex-harness driver who claims to have retired after training greyhounds in Florida for 40 years, said: "There is no other way to train the dogs without using living rabbits."

Death is a by-product of greyhound racing. The dog who falls behind the pack writes its own death sentence. Approximately 50% of the greyhounds bred for racing are killed. Most owners and trainers never see a track because they fail to demonstrate competitive characteristics. Most retired racing dogs are destroyed because they do not make suitable pets. The dogs are raised in such a socially deprived environment that it is difficult for them to relate with people. Also, their killer instinct forces them to bite any­thing that moves, including people.

Although private veterinarians and local humane societies in the vicinity of training farms report a high volume of greyhound euthanasia, HSUS suspects some breeders and trainers kill the animals themselves to save veterinary fees and to avoid chastisement by show judges.

Greyhound racing is legal in nine states. Promoters boast that they are planning or have active legislation to legalize the so-called sport in 11 other states. Legislatures in West Virginia and California are now actively considering greyhound racing bills.

The Golden State Greyhound Assn. (GSSGA) has recently mounted a well-financed campaign to legalize gambling on greyhound racing in California. In GSSGA literature Association President George G. Harde declared: "Greyhound racing is coming to California. Either with a legislative bill in 1975 or a ballot initiative in 1976. We have members in every community in Cali­for­nia working toward this goal. The battle lines have been drawn. Now is the time to get involved." Harde also claims that the humani­tar­i­an protest against dog racing in California is settled because the bill now pending before the state legislature out­lawing the use of live lures while training greyhounds in California and requires that farms be set up for retired racing dogs.

HSUS West Coast Regional Director Franz Dantzler called Harde's argu­ment "fallacious." "Most greyhounds raced in the United States are trained in Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas, where they are used for anti-cruelty laws and high rabbit popula­tion. He said, "What is going to stop the California dog being sympa­thetic for importing greyhounds in California?"

Dantzler also expressed con­cern that owners would ship dogs out of California for racing at other tracks prior to their retirement to avoid having to keep them at expensive retirement farms.

The bill to legalize betting on grey­hound racing (California Assembly Bill 455) was introduced by State Assem­blyman Leon Ralph of Los Angeles. In a letter to Dantzler, Ralph said, "I feel that my bill establishes new standards in the humane treatment of grey­hounds, and hopefully will be used as a model in legislation in other greyhound racing states."

In vocal support of his bill, Ralph re­peatedly stated that the legalization of an estimated $1 billion gambling busi­ness in the state will create thousands of jobs and furnish millions of dollars in tax revenue for the state.

In a Jan. 19, 1975 editorial opposing Ralph's bill, the Sacramento Bee stated: "California had legalized betting on grey­hound races in the 1930s and it became so corrupt that it was discontinued. There is ample reason to believe rack­eaters and hoodlums would again try to move in on dog racing if betting were legalized."

The Bee also carried a news article on Jan. 26, 1975, describing Harde as an ex-harness driver who claims to have gambled up to $5,000 a night at various California horse racing tracks. The article said Harde appeared in Sacramento over a year ago to work with Ralph on the greyhound racing bill. Harde is quoted as saying that he wrote the bill himself with the help of state employees. Harde also told the Bee that he gave $1,000 to Ralph's reelec­tion campaign.

HSUS's efforts to protest Harde's campaign to legalize greyhound gam­bling in California succeeded in his making the following statement in a let­ter to Virginia Handley, a humanitarian from San Francisco, Calif.: "I am damn tired of people opposing our greyhound legislation who don't know the first thing about it and make no effort to educate themselves. At the top of the list is The Humane Society of the United States."

Across the nation, the Florida First District Court of Appeal publicly sanc­tioned the use of live rabbits in the train­ing of greyhounds when it ruled in March that a greyhound training track near Ocala, Fla., could resume using the animal in training dogs. The court dis­

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missed an injunction against Richard D. Kiper and the Central Florida Greyhound College Inc., supporting Kiper's claim that it was necessary to use live rabbits in training greyhounds. The court said since the use of live rabbits was neces­sary, it did not violate the state law that only prohibits activities that are "un­necessarily" cruel.

In a letter to the attorney general of Florida, HSUS Vice President and Gen­eral Counsel Murdaugh Stuart Madden urged a rehearing of the court's deci­sion. "The HSUS finds it deplorable that the Florida legislature has tacitly made this barbaric practice exempt from the application of your state anti-cruelty laws," he said.

Madden said that the court had seized upon the word "unnecessarily" in the law and in a "bizarre ruling" admitted that it was necessary to use live rabbits to effectively train greyhounds. "The court presumably concluded that it was necessary to the box office, necessary to the bloodthirsty fan, and necessary to the promoter, then the greyhound industry is exempt from the state's anti-cruelty law," he said.

HSUS will continue to fight the pro­moters and cruelties of greyhound rac­ing. The Society urges all humanitarians to voice their opinions to state officials and local community leaders when at­tempts are made to legalize dog racing in their states. HSUS also suggests hu­manitarians form local committees to expose greyhound racing to public scru­tiny. Contact HSUS for information and expert assistance on the practices in­volved in greyhound racing.