

5th Annual Greyhound Safety & Track Surface Seminar
sponsored by
AGTOA/Gulf Greyhound Park/TGA

This year's Seminar was held on September 18 & 19th in Waco with over 60 attendees representing Wheeling, The Woodlands, Derby Lane, VictoryLand, Dairyland, Birmingham, Gulf, Corpus Christi, Valley, Phoenix, Tucson, Daytona, Jacksonville, and Mile High. It was held in conjunction with a Judges' Accreditation Seminar, providing over 20 judges the opportunity to hear from tracks and veterinarians on safety issues.

The first speaker on Monday was **Dr. Brad Fenwick** who gave us the latest news on kennel cough, the different strains, treatment and quarantines. He also spoke about other vaccines and their protocol. This is an issue that needs to be addressed on a national level to ensure that the greyhounds are kept healthy without over-vaccinating, a large cost to our industry.

As an update, **Dr. Fenwick** called last Friday to say that he has received the first doses of the kennel cough vaccine and he will begin field trials. Progress is definitely being made.

The second speaker on Monday was **Jim Gartland**, the GM from The Woodlands. Jim put together a terrific tape on safe operation of the Aldritt lure. He has established routines for maintenance, pre-race checks, safety lights and personnel training, including leadouts. The tape also showed how placement of the lure affects the break and the run to the first turn.

Next, **David Peck** spoke on preparation of the track surface. David is the Chairman of the TGA's Track Committee, and stressed consistency of the surface. Starting with good quality sand and complemented with adequate water and proper equipment, a safe track should provide a firm, consistent surface with a good cushion.

Dr. Mike Herron spoke on the importance of a "Soundness Exam". The soundness exam prevents a minor injury from becoming a career ending injury, and attempts to answer the question "is it the greyhound or the track surface". He also touched on genetic predisposition to injury, nutrition and proper conditioning to reduce injuries.

Dr. Robert Gillette, Director of the Sports Medicine Program in Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine, gave an extremely interesting talk on research he has conducted on athletic injuries. With high speed photography, he captured movement of greyhounds to determine how injuries occur and what anatomical parts are affected. An important point he emphasized was the low injury rate of racing greyhounds as compared to other sports.

Craig Angle, also with Auburn's program, gave summaries of studies done on injury rates, including Wisconsin and Colorado. These studies showed the types and rates of injuries over time at different tracks, and the location on the track where injuries occurred.

Monday evening the group spent a few hours at the Texas Rangers Hall of Fame for the annual barbecue, followed by informal discussions in the atrium back at the Clarion hotel.

On Tuesday morning, vans were provided to transport everyone to the TGA Schooling Track south of Waco. There were a lot of young Texas greyhounds schooling under the watchful eye of lure operator and TGA track manager **Paul Saulters**. The group had the opportunity to walk the track surface, observe the depth and conformity of footprints, and watch some young champions in the making.

Back at the Clarion, **Glynnie Wolford** of Polytrack gave a presentation on their artificial surface that is currently being used at several US horse tracks. This topic generated a lot of interest due to the material's consistency, low maintenance and safety record. Some greyhound tracks expressed an interest in installing it in a sprint run for testing.

Sally Briggs, GM of Gulf Greyhound, talked about several situations she dealt with over the last year, including Hurricane Rita and the evacuation process, security threats and kennel cough. She stressed the importance of planning for a variety of circumstances, including maintaining emergency supplies of feed, water and medications for the greyhounds. **Shane Bolender** of Wheeling spoke about their experience with flooding, and good communication with the kennels. **Cal Fillmore**, former head judge at Gulf, talked about the necessity of cooperation and communication between tracks and state regulators.

In addition to the formal presentations, there was a lot of informal discussion between the attendees up until late at night. A lot of good information and experience was shared between the tracks, all benefiting the greyhounds. We are looking forward to an even bigger and better seminar next year.