



## The Aging Greyhound

Living with our greyhounds and seeing them every day it can be easy to miss the subtle signs of aging that signal a need for some lifestyle changes to support your greyhound's quality of life as they get older. Any greyhound over the age of 8 years old is generally considered to be a 'veteran' or an elderly dog.

### Signs your dog may need some extra support:

- Slowing down on walks, particularly towards the end.
- Finding it harder to get up from laying down, appearing stiff when they do.
- Coat changes – such as going grey around their face and neck area.
- Weight loss – greyhounds have very little body fat, so as they lose muscle mass with age they become thinner, unlike other dog breeds who tend to gain weight as they age. They can also have a reduced appetite as they grow older which means it's extremely important to ensure their diet works for them to give them the nutrition they need to support their health.
- Behaviour changes – an older greyhound will tend to sleep more, they might become more clingy or insecure, or they may even become grumpy.
- Need more toilet breaks during the day and/or night as they struggle to 'hold it' as well as they used to.
- Be less able to cope with warmer or colder temperatures than they used to.

It's important to remember that as dogs don't live as long as we do, they age much quicker than us and often being very stoic, it's not always easy to spot the signs that our greyhound needs some extra support. Just as we often need a variety of support, understanding, and kindness as we get older, your greyhound will also benefit from your gentle understanding as their needs change in their later years.

### What you can do:

**Visit your vet** – Regular visits to your vet are very important throughout your greyhound's life to keep them healthy and support their quality of life as they get older. Discussing joint supplements and other potential support such as massage therapy or pain relief with your vet can help support stiff and arthritic joints.

**Lifestyle adjustments** - Small changes such as shorter walks and more of them, to help keep our greyhound fit and active can be beneficial; a change in their diet or the amount of food/treats given to them if needed to help maintain their good condition can also support them during their older years. Your greyhound may feel more vulnerable as they become older, and if they have aching joints etc. it is important to consider whether allowing younger and/or more boisterous dogs and children to be around them and/or play with them is still appropriate. Your greyhound may prefer more calm and quiet interactions with others and should always have a quiet place they can go to rest in peace away from noise and other dogs, children etc.

**Home adjustments** – making some adjustments at home and for when you are out and about with your dog can make a big difference to your greyhound's quality of life. Slippery floors around the home, even ones your greyhound might have coped well with in the past, could be more comfortable for them to walk on without fear

of slipping and potentially injuring themselves by putting down some rubber backed mats or rugs, which can be bought cheaply online or from a home/DIY store.

If your greyhound struggles to control themselves going up and coming down your stairs at home and always flies up and/or down them at speed, this suggests they lack the strength to manage them safely and encouraging them to remain downstairs using training and potentially a baby gate to block access to the stairs may be helpful to protect them from harm.

With regards car journeys, jumping in and out of the car can be struggle for older dogs and can be painful for them. Lifting them in and out can be an option if you're strong enough to do so safely or training them to use a dog ramp or steps to get in and out of the car can be a great alternative.

**Engage your greyhound's brain** - Keeping a dog mentally active is also key as they grow older especially if they are not as physically active as they used to be – take a look at the activities included in the 'Food and Water' section under 'Treats' for some ideas of what you could do with them at home. There are also a growing number of fun and low impact activities you can do with your dog that are becoming popular around the world such as Mantrailing (greyhounds might be sighthounds but they love to use their noses too!), and Hoopers etc. It isn't true that you can't teach an old dog new tricks, so you could even try teaching them some new tricks (please see the section on 'Teaching your greyhound life skills' for details of science based training techniques and where to find appropriate support if you'd like to join a training class etc.).

Remember, greyhounds love doing things with us, so sometimes even the little things like sitting with us at a café or in the park watching the world go by can make all the difference to them, deepening our bond with them, and supporting their ongoing wellbeing (as well as ours too).

## **About the IRGT**

Founded in 1997 by Rásaíocht Con Éireann/Greyhound Racing Ireland, the Irish Retired Greyhound Trust is funded by contributions from the sport of greyhound racing and through private donations, and promotes retired racing greyhounds as pets, supports their transition and preparation for life as a family companion, and works to find homes for them both within Ireland and overseas through collaboration with responsible partner rehoming organisations.

To find out more about our work and how you can support us, please visit: [www.irgt.ie](http://www.irgt.ie)

RCN 20034849, CHY 12127

*Information provided is for general guidance purposes only and is not intended to replace professional advice specific to your greyhound and/or circumstances. If in any doubt, always seek formal advice from your vet or appropriate veterinary professional. IRGT does not accept any liability for the contents of this guide or for the consequences of any action taken on the basis of the information herein.*