

# LURE COURSING AND RACING WITH YOUR ITALIAN GREYHOUND



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The authors of this informational pamphlet are offering their opinions based on experiences as handlers in lure coursing and/or racing. The authors are in no way responsible for any accident or injury that may result.

***Run Smart and Run Safe!***

## **REGISTRATION AND ENTRIES**

There are 4 different running venues for which Italian Greyhounds are eligible:

- LGRA - straight racing - [www.lgra.org](http://www.lgra.org)
- NOTRA - oval track racing - [www.notra.org](http://www.notra.org)
- ASFA - lure coursing - [www.asfa.org](http://www.asfa.org)
- AKC lure coursing - [www.akc.org/events/lure\\_coursing](http://www.akc.org/events/lure_coursing)

Prior to entering your dog for competition, you will need to register your dog. Please note that your dog does not need to be registered in order to practice.

If you are entering a lure coursing field trial, your dog must be registered with the AKC or an approved foreign registry.

If you are entering a race meet, your dog must be first registered with a recognized registry (listed below). Additionally, the racing organizations (LGRA and NOTRA) maintain separate registries and you will need to register your IG with them as well.

Recognized registries for IGs include:

- American Kennel Club (AKC)
- Canadian Kennel Club (CKC)
- United Kennel Club (UKC) [*LGRA only*]
- Any recognized foreign registry, such as FCI
- AKC Indefinite Listing Privilege (ILP) or CKC equivalent, also accepted

You can register with LGRA or NOTRA in person at your first meet.

LGRA:

1. Go to [www.lgra.org](http://www.lgra.org)
2. From the toolbar on the left, click on Entry Form
3. Print the entry form and complete the section marked First Time Entry (FTE)
4. When you arrive at the race, submit the entry form, a copy of your dog's recognized registration and the \$2 registration fee to the Race Secretary

You may also register online at [www.lgra.org](http://www.lgra.org), click on REGISTRATION and complete the Temporary Registration Application. You will still need to mail a copy of your dog's recognized registration and the \$2 registration fee to the LGRA Registrar-Recorder as detailed in the instructions on the website.

NOTRA:

1. Go to [www.notra.org](http://www.notra.org)
2. From the left toolbar, click on Downloads
3. Print the Race Meet Quick Entry form and complete the section marked First Time Entry (FTE)
4. When you arrive at the race, submit the entry form, a copy of your dog's recognized registration and the \$2 registration fee to the Race Secretary

PLEASE NOTE: Once you register, it may take some time before you are issued a LGRA or NOTRA number. This does not prevent you from entering your dog in any race. Until a number is assigned, your dog will be recorded as 'IG-Pending.'

### **HOW TO FIND A RACE OR FIELD TRIAL**

To find an event near you, go to the organization's website and locate the calendar of events. The Calendar provides the date, host club, location and the Race or Field Trial Secretary's contact information. Contact the Secretary to request a premium. Premiums are often available for download on the host club websites.

### **Premiums**

The Premium is a fact sheet that provides all the necessary details about the race meet or field trial such as:

- Address and location of the field, as well as directions to the field
- Pre-Entry and Entry price and deadlines
- Roll Call time (time when the dogs will be inspected for eligibility to run)
- Description of the field and facilities (whether there is shade, water, etc.)
- Location of local emergency veterinary care facility
- List of nearby dog friendly hotels
- Nearby dog friendly RV or tent campsites

### **Entries and Pre-Entries**

Clubs typically offer a discounted price for dogs that are pre-entered prior to the event day. Pre-entry and entry fees vary, depending on the club and field rental. Details about the pre-entry and entry fees, the pre-entry deadline and who to contact to pre-enter (by mail and email) are detailed in the premium.

### **Entry Forms**

Whether you pre-enter your dog in advance or wait until the day of the event to enter, you will need to submit an entry form. Some clubs include an entry form with their premium. If not, then you can print an entry form from the website. If a club hosts two races or field trials over the weekend, you will need to submit a separate entry form with the Race or Field Trial Secretary for each day.

### **Owner Participation**

Unlike AKC and ASFA Lure Coursing, LGRA and NOTRA racing are owner participation sports. Owners run the meet and are responsible for all judging. Everyone who has entered a dog to compete and those who are there to practice are expected to help out in some capacity or apprentice to learn.

Owners who are new to racing can help with:

- Walking dogs to the box
- Catching dogs at the finish
- Line Judging (watching and recording the order in which the dogs finish)
- Foul Judging (watching to see if any dogs interfere with one another, in accordance with the LGRA or NOTRA rules)

Prior to line or foul judging you will have the opportunity to apprentice with experienced judges. In addition, as you become more involved in the sport you can learn other functions such as box operator, lure operator, roll call inspector and even race secretary.

Although lure coursing is not an owner participation sport, there are still a number of jobs that you can learn as well. These include lure operator, huntmaster, roll call inspector and field trial secretary. Help is often needed setting the field in the morning for both racing and coursing. There is a tremendous amount of time, energy and effort that goes into running a race or a field trial, so it is important that everyone pitches in. Rule Books provide descriptions of the many jobs and are available for download on the websites or can be ordered by mail.

## **CONDITIONING**

### **Before You Start - Getting Your Hound In Ideal Condition to Compete**

Before considering an entry, your hound should be in the best physical condition possible. Consider RACING to be the equivalent to human sprinting competitions and LURE COURSING to be equivalent to human marathons. Your hound needs to be prepared. Think of him as a "Canine Athlete."

While lure coursing and racing are great sports for you and your hound to enjoy, we must remember that the safety of our hounds is of utmost importance. As responsible owners, we should never knowingly put our hounds at additional risk.

If you do not have a formal exercise program with your hound, it is likely that he is not in the best possible physical condition. Start conditioning exercises as far in advance as possible. These changes do not happen overnight.

### **Risks Of Competing With Unfit Dogs**

From "Sighthounds Afield" by Denise Como:

- "A hound who is overweight and/or not in good physical condition is at a much higher risk of SERIOUS injury than a hound who is physically fit. These injuries can include pulled and torn muscles, ligaments, and tendons, broken bones, cramping, heat exhaustion, dehydration and other forms of extreme unpleasantness."

- "A hound that runs too far or too hard for its physical condition produces too much lactic acid for the internal buffering system to handle, resulting in external rhabdomyolysis or metabolic acidosis. The overabundance of lactic acid increases stress, damages cells, slows liver function, impedes heart function, and diminishes energy output to the brain. Some obvious signs of severe acidosis are muscle twitching, involuntary movements, cardiac arrhythmia, disorientation, and in the most severe cases, coma and even death."

### **Some Ways To Condition Your Hound**

- Free exercise (running, jumping, playing) in a large secure area, regularly
- Walking, jogging and hiking regularly and on varied terrain. Start off light, building your "workout sessions" to longer distances. Several miles per week at a consistent speed is ideal, with 3 to 5 sessions per week.

- Lure coursing or racing events are good places to practice short, straight distances (50-150 yards to start) if your dog is keen on the bunny. Running at a gallop helps to build loin (back) muscles.
- Be careful with frequent walking or jogging on pavement. The impact on joints over time can be detrimental - especially in young dogs who are still growing.
- Dogs under the age of 18 months should not be forced to exercise too strenuously. Keep exercise in moderation and within the dog's physical capabilities.
- Older dogs should be checked for pre-existing conditions before competing. It is never a bad idea to discuss your concerns with your vet regarding the condition of your hound and your interest in entering him in a competition such as lure coursing or racing.

### **Is My Hound In Good Condition?**

- You should see good muscle definition in the shoulders, back, loin and hindquarters. When putting your hands on the dog, the body should feel hard, firm, strong, muscular and lean.
- With Italian Greyhounds, often being able to see 2-3 vertebrae and a suggestion of rib/hip bones is a good indication of healthy weight (though this can vary depending on the build of the dog).
- "Layers" of fat should not be found anywhere on the dog. Dogs that feel soft with "squishy" layers of fat over their ribs/back are not in a healthy weight. Carrying excess weight in strenuous sports such as racing or coursing can be damaging on the joints of finely boned sighthounds (or any dog at all!). Keep in mind that 1-2 extra pounds on a 10 lb frame is equivalent to 10-20 pounds on a 100 lb frame. Overweight dogs should not be entered in competition. Period.

## **WARM UPS AND COOL DOWNS**

Always begin with a warm-up exercise prior to running or conditioning your dog. The warm-up will help dilate blood vessels, giving the dog an increased supply of oxygen and nutrients which in turn feed muscles and nerves. Warm-ups can consist of massage, stretching and light trotting.

Cooling down your dog is also very important to help regulate heart rate and also to help bring your dog down psychologically. Walking for 5-10 minutes after running or conditioning your dog is very beneficial.

## **TRAINING BASICS - How to Get the Most Out of Practice**

Your IG will need to be well and fully trained in order to run successfully. Just like any other sport or event, this takes practice. Most race meets (both NOTRA and LGRA) offer practice runs between programs. Lure coursing trials (ASFA and AKC) typically offer practice at the end of the day, after the Saturday trials. If you plan to attend a meet or trial for practice, it is a good idea to contact the Race or Field Trial Secretary ahead of time by phone or email. Check in and introduce yourself when you arrive. There may be a sign up sheet available for practice runs and a nominal fee is often charged. If you are at a race, ask about apprenticing a job such as line or foul judge. Owner participation is important in both LGRA and NOTRA, so practice can be for you as well as for your dog.

Some important things to remember:

- Be patient! Taking your time with training will pay off in the long run.
- Always end on a positive note. Leave your dog wanting more.
- Between practices, you can train at home by playing with a plastic bag or fur tied to a lunge whip and by conditioning your dog.
- Decide ahead of time what you want to accomplish at each practice and be clear with your instruction to the lure operator and/or huntmaster. Ex. "Let him run straight out, take one turn and catch the bunny."
- Praise, praise, praise! Always throw a big party when your dog succeeds to reinforce that you WANT him to chase and catch the lure. Play tug with the lure after the run and praise your dog lavishly. Remember that "GO" sounds a lot like "NO"!!

The articles available on this website contain very helpful information and can help you set a training plan for your dog. Some of these basic steps are outlined below. <http://www.whippetracing.org/Information/TrainingTips.cfm>

1. Start building prey drive by having your dog chase a fabric, fur or plastic bag lure tied to a string or a lunge whip (available at most tack shops for under \$20)
2. Introduce your dog to the lure machine with short 25-50 yard runs. Walk your dog ahead of the lure and let it pass him before you release him to chase it.
3. Over time, work up to 50-75 yard runs. Then 100 to 200 yard runs.
4. Once your dog is very keen on running these straight sprints, begin to introduce turns. Start with short distances and 1 or 2 turns.

5. Gradually increase the length and amount of turns until your dog is easily completing regulation sized courses.
6. Make sure you are properly conditioning your dog once you have reached more advanced levels of training. A poorly conditioned dog may get tired and quit. This is a very tough habit to break once started.

## **BOX TRAINING BASICS**

Training your IG to run out of the box should be done slowly in fun and short sessions. It is important that your dog not be afraid of the box; going in or coming out. While every dog is different and some may take longer than others, here is a basic training schedule that has worked well for many. It is best for your dog not to rush through these steps and remember to always keep it positive. If at any time your dog has trouble on a step, go back to the step before and let him succeed. Try the next step another day.

1. Start pups off with being comfortable handed off to a friendly stranger.
2. Introduce your dog to the noise of the box. Open and shut it. Let your dog watch other dogs race out of the box.
3. Call your dog through the open box. Run with your dog a bit and reward with a toy, treat and/or praise. Don't allow your dog to exit the box from the back.
4. Let your dog chase the lure a short distance through an open box.
5. Let your dog experience the closed box. Your dog should still be running alone and should only be chasing the lure a short distance.
6. Let your dog run the entire course out of the box. Again, your dog should still be running alone.
7. Last and final step is to have your dog complete a schooling run. This is an entire course, out of the box, with another experienced and clean running IG. Schooling runs should be done prior to entering a race for the first time, after your IG is well-trained and ready to race in competition.

## **MUZZLE TRAINING**

Keep it fun and simple. Place the muzzle on your dog and feed treats through the muzzle one after the other. Only give treats when your dog is relaxed and not trying to take the muzzle off. Soon your dog will make a positive association with wearing the muzzle. Muzzle = cookies. Muzzle = Chasing the Lure. Muzzle = FUN!

## EQUIPMENT

### RACING:

1. Well-fitting muzzle. Size 2 & 3 are average. Size 4 for larger lgs.
2. Racing blankets, sized to fit your dog, numbered 1 (red), 2 (blue), 3 (white) and 4 (green).
3. Box lead - to wear walking to the box. Quick-release are best. Should be wide enough at the neck to be comfortable
4. Catch lead - to wear when caught at the finish line and walked out. A simple martingale lead is typical.
5. Tag collar - (optional) one without dangling tags is safest for your dog. Please note that it is much easier to box a dog that is wearing some sort of collar.

### COURSING:

1. Lure coursing slip lead
2. Catch lead (optional)
3. Coursing blankets, sized to fit your dog, in standard coursing colors of blue, yellow and pink.

### Additional Items for Both Racing and Coursing:

1. A well stocked first aid kit (see paragraph to follow)
2. Plenty of water
3. Protein snacks for your dog
4. Wet (cool) coat for hot days
5. Warm up (turnout) coat for cold days
6. Crate fan
7. Shade blanket(s) or tent
8. Folding chair (for you!)

### VENDORS:

[www.ryanspet.com](http://www.ryanspet.com) - plastic basket muzzles

<http://www.morroco.com/itbasdogmuz.html> - plastic basket muzzles

[www.pupperwear.com](http://www.pupperwear.com)

[www.gocoursing.com](http://www.gocoursing.com)

[www.raindanceigs.com](http://www.raindanceigs.com) - martingale leads, box leads and cool coats

[www.cleanrun.com](http://www.cleanrun.com)

[www.northwindcatalog.com](http://www.northwindcatalog.com)

[www.italian-greyhound.net](http://www.italian-greyhound.net)

[www.sighthoundgear.com](http://www.sighthoundgear.com)

[www.boomerangtags.com](http://www.boomerangtags.com) - breakaway neoprene collars with flat tags

[www.pettags.com](http://www.pettags.com) - personalized embroidered nylon collars

## FIELD FIRST AID KIT

A compact first aid kit like those that can be purchased at a discount store may seem like a good idea - until you are faced with a true emergency. Try this: Imagine you have to provide stabilization for a broken limb. Open your first aid kit and try to find the things you'll need. Is there a splint, pain medication and wraps? What if the fracture is a compound break? What will you use to stop the bleeding? Chances are good that the compact first aid kit you are looking at is inadequate. According to Dr. James Radcliffe, DVM, a well-stocked first aid kit should be about the size of a duffel bag and should contain the following items:

- Latex gloves
- Gauze sponges
- Gauze rolls
- Ace bandages
- Vetwrap
- Adhesive tape, including electrical and duct tape
- Sterile pads
- Scissors
- Clippers
- Staple gun
- Leashes (2)
- Towels
- Muzzle
- Blanket
- Rectal thermometer and petroleum jelly
- Sterile lubricant
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Pain medication
- Cold packs
- Super glue

- Rubbing alcohol
- Neosporin
- Epsom salts
- Baby syringe
- Sterile eye wash
- Sterile eye lubricant
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
- Glucose/corn syrup
- Styptic powder/pencil/spray
- Tick remover
- Flashlight and/or pen light
- Clean cloths
- Needlenose pliers
- Betadine scrub
- Emergency numbers

Splints can be improvised by using a rolled up newspaper if a manufactured splint is not available. For suspected spinal injuries, the dog will need to be slid onto a board or another portable hard surface. A blanket is not the proper type of support for this type of injury.

Dr. James E. Radcliffe, DVM is the owner of Town and Country Animal Hospital, Inc. and is a noted expert on sports injuries in the performance dog.

**RECOMMENDED READING AND VIEWING:**

- Peak Performance: Coaching the Canine Athlete - M. Christine Zink DVM PhD
- Care of the Racing Greyhound: a Guide for Trainers, Breeders and Veterinarians - Blythe, Gannon and Craig
- Sighthounds Afield - Denise Como
- Strengthening the Performance Dog - DVD - Deb Gross Saunders