

## Dog Fancy Profiles Greyhound

### Greyhound in Brief

Country of origin: ancient Egypt.

Group: Hound (AKC), Sighthound (UKC).

Life span: 10 to 12 years.

Color: Wide range of solid colors and patterns, including fawn, white, black, grey, and many different shades of brindle (dark striping over a lighter background).

Coat: Short, smooth, and firm.

Grooming: Rub down with a hound mitt or brush weekly.

Height/weight: Males, 65 to 70 pounds; females, 60 to 65 pounds; about 27 to 30 inches.

Trainability: Moderate.

Activity level: Low inside, high when chasing.

Known health problems: Gastric dilatation volvulus (bloat), a life-threatening condition in which the stomach twists; osteosarcoma (bone cancer). Sensitive to anesthesia.

Best home: Must live indoors.

Good with children: Yes, although some get nippy if harassed.

Good with other pets: Yes, with other large dogs; may mistake cats or small, fast dogs for prey.

National breed club: Greyhound Club of America [www.greyhoundclubofamerica.org](http://www.greyhoundclubofamerica.org)

### Greyhound

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#### Greyhound: A work of heart

Affectionate and independent, the swift Greyhound is a sweet study in contradictions.

By Eve Adamson

It was a typical evening at the Ide home in Lakeside, Calif.: Greyhounds draped over couches and chairs, commandeering every comfortable surface in the family room. But tonight, Patricia Ide's daughter hadn't done the dishes. Ide called her daughter downstairs to lecture her. "I scolded her pretty firmly, and when I turned around, there wasn't a Greyhound in sight," says Ide, who looked out the back door and saw six little faces peeking out from the bushes at the far end of the yard. "If I even raise my voice in the slightest, they are gone," says Ide of her sensitive Greyhound pack. "They think they might be next."

#### Ready, set ... lounge!

The sensitive but independent, aloof but affectionate, speedy couch potato known as the Greyhound is a sweet study in contradictions, all wrapped up in the clean lines, elegant curves, and perfect symmetry befitting a work of art. "Everything on the Greyhound is long, narrow, and fine," says Ide, who serves as president of the Greyhound Club of America. "In perfect form, the Greyhound is both utilitarian and aesthetically gorgeous."

Once the pampered pet of Egyptian royalty, Greyhounds still campaign for a privileged life today (just try keeping them off the couch). At the same time, a well-bred, athletic Greyhound is the second fastest land animal on earth — only the cheetah can outrun him.

Content to snooze the day away, Greyhounds prefer soft surfaces, warm temperatures, and luxurious accommodations. "They really live up to their reputation as being couch potatoes," says breeder Dani Edgerton of Canfield, Ohio. Ide remembers Drumbeat, a 90-pound Greyhound she and husband Don owned 20 years ago. "He would knock us into the wall to get into our bed, and you couldn't pull him out," she says. "He would stretch out between us, and we would be clinging to the edges of the mattress with no covers." Ide finally decided to train Drumbeat to sleep elsewhere, a project that took months.

#### The speed of grey

After the lounging, Greyhounds truly find their calling on the run. "I give mine a good hard run every day," says Sheryl Bartel, a Greyhound breeder in Mount Vernon, Wash., and Greyhound Club of America board member. "They like to exercise each other, and if you have Greyhounds, they will run circles or figure eights in your yard. You can have a lawn, or you can have Greyhounds, but you can't have both." Edgerton's 4-year-old show and field champion Dirk loves lure-coursing, a sport in which dogs chase a plastic-bag lure along a course. "He gets so massively focused that he can't

think of anything else if he thinks he might get the chance to chase that plasticbag,"Edgerton says.

Edgerton's senior Greyhound, Chia, enthusiastically runs the perimeter of their paddock area every morning. "She may be asleep on the couch 99 percent of the time, but once she gets going, she thinks running is the greatest thing," Edgerton says. Two or more Greyhounds can exercise each other effectively in a large yard, but a fence is necessary, as the focused Greyhound laying chase won't notice oncoming cars. Critters take note! "They will certainly get your squirrels, and while some of them can live well with cats indoors, if the Greyhound sees a cat outdoors and the cat starts running, all bets are off," Bartel says.

Millennia of breeding for speed have given the Greyhound a few characteristics unique to dogs bred for coursing: a large heart, deep chest, thin skin, and a double suspension gallop. "They have two positions with all feet off the ground, with feet extended and with feet contracted," Ide explains.

#### Greyhounds at home

Quiet and polite, the Greyhound may seem easy to train. Think again. "Greyhounds aren't bred to do what you want," Ide says. "They are bred to think for themselves." Gentle, reward-based methods work best for the sensitive Greyhound.

Greyhounds are notorious for collecting objects into little piles. Five-year-old Arrow retrieves the cut ends of zucchini, piles them in the living room, then gobbles them up, Bartel reports. Arrow also regularly snatches the sponge from the kitchen sink and hides it.

Greyhounds may look skinny, but they are surprisingly able to out-eat other breeds of similar weight. The Greyhound's light coat is easy to groom but necessitates a sweater in cold temperatures. "If you need a coat, then your Greyhound does, too," Bartel says.

In terms of health, "hip dysplasia and bloat are very rare in track dogs," Ide says. "On the other hand, bone cancer occurs in track dogs and is extremely rare in dogs bred for the show ring." Bartel, herself an anesthesiologist, emphasizes that "vets need to know Greyhounds are sensitive to gas anesthetics and should never be subjected to barbiturate anesthetics."

#### The original purebred dog

Many historians believe the Greyhound, depicted in Egyptian art as early as 3000 B.C., was among the first dog breeds to be selectively bred by humans. "Greyhound" may come from Graius (Grecian) or the old English grech or greg, meaning dog. Ovid described the Greyhound in Rome around the time of Christ, and in England, a ninth-century manuscript depicts Saxton chieftain Elfric, Duke of Mercia, with two hunting Greyhounds.

In 1912, O.P. Smith invented the mechanical lure, and track racing for Greyhounds began. Today, many Greyhounds in this country are bred and raised specifically for the purpose of track racing, while a minority are raised for the show ring and lure-coursing. Greyhound racing is highly controversial, and many organizations have sprung up around the country to help place retired racing Greyhounds into pet homes. Many such organizations are staffed by activists working to abolish track racing.

#### Retirees make good pets

Greyhound Protection League founder Susan Netboy, of Penn Valley, Calif., encourages potential pet owners to consider a retired racer. Most are between two and four years, have outgrown many puppyhood challenges, and are generally well-socialized, well-trained, and grateful for a loving home, according to Netboy.

Potential adopters should screen rescue organizations by asking a few questions, Netboy says. Look for personality profiling, a return policy, and the provision of basic health care, including "spay or neuter, teeth cleaning, shots and worming, and preferably a tick titer test," Netboy says.

Whether you love the breed because of its sweet temperament, elegant lines, or quiet ways, owning a Greyhound can be a deeply satisfying experience — for your senses and your heart.

It's no wonder Greyhound owners are happy to cling to the edges of their beds.

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