

Greyhounds Covered Under N.H. Anti-Cruelty Bill

Previous animal-cruelty legislation didn't apply to dog racing tracks.

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Greyhounds at New Hampshire's three dog racetracks have gained coverage under state law. The governor's recent approval of a bill restores racing dogs to the protection of the existing anti-cruelty statute.

Gov. John Lynch signed House Bill 1430, which also applies to racing horses. Under the measure, facilities licensed to conduct live running or harness horseracing or live dog racing are subject to criminal penalties if animal abuse takes place.

For nearly a decade, potential abusers were immune from criminal prosecution under legislation passed in 1999 that said the anti-cruelty law didn't apply to animals at tracks. Now, individuals that abuse Greyhounds at commercial racetracks in the state can be prosecuted for animal cruelty.

"Greyhounds are like any other dogs and sometimes that's a fact that gets lost," said Carey Theil of GREY2K USA, a group dedicated to passing Greyhound-protection laws. The biggest factor in getting the bill approved, she said, was the tremendous support from citizens who wanted to see these dogs gain protection.

Racetrack owners opposed the bill and said it's unnecessary since animal abuse allegations go to the pari-mutuel commission, which oversees the racetracks and has rules on the care of animals.

The act, approved in June, went into effect July 1.