

## Your Greyhound's First Few Days in Your Home



Cougar, Lilly, and Fudge—all Irish Greyhounds, prison trained and rehomed

Our greyhounds arrive from Ireland, live in one of our foster homes for a short period of time, and then go to the prison for training. Even though we work with our greyhound foster dogs to acclimate them to a home environment, there are still many strange things for them to learn in their new home. Sometimes, our foster homes have other dogs (usually other greyhounds) for the newly retired racer to follow around. This is a huge help in acclimating them to a totally new set of circumstances, sights, smells, and house rules.

Your newly adopted greyhound may be tense and somewhat withdrawn at first. Sometimes, your greyhound arriving from the prison will cry or whine the first night or two. This is entirely normal behavior for a dog dealing with the stress of a new environment. It does not mean that they are unhappy or don't like you. Being quiet and reassuring to your dog will go a long way toward helping him or her to adjust to your home. The prison dogs graduate on Fridays, so you will have them in your home on a weekend. Hopefully, you will be able to spend some time with him or her. Your new greyhound may be very afraid the first few nights because he is unsure and lonely. He is used to his trainers at the prison, and he has been surrounded by other greyhounds all his life.

**Use of Crates to Help Your Greyhound Adjust:** We recommend that you use a crate to assist your greyhound with the transition from the foster home to your home, or to have in case you need to go to a shelter during hurricanes. However, for a prison dog, this is usually not necessary. Your greyhound should be able to stand up and turn around comfortably in the crate. It should be at least 30" high. Put a blanket or comforter in the crate and your greyhound will be quite happy.

**Introducing Your Greyhound to Your Pets:** When you arrive at home, make sure that you give your greyhound adequate time to potty before entering the house. If you have other dogs, bring them outside individually and introduce the dogs to the greyhound in a neutral place like the front yard. Once the dogs have started ignoring each other, take them for a short walk together and then walk

into the house. The process is the same for introductions to cats except it takes place inside the home. Always introduce the greyhound to the cat or small dog with the greyhound wearing a turn-out muzzle (one is provided with your dog) and on a short leash. If the cat does not want to come up to the greyhound, do not force it. The cat will come out and meet the greyhound in their own time. Always remember, however, that even through the cat and the greyhound live happily together in the house, it is NOT OK to leave them in the yard together.



Manus with his friend, Millie,  
Jake and Gem, all Irish Greyhounds who have been adopted.

### **Introducing your greyhound to your home:**

With the leash on your greyhound, walk him around the house and let him become familiar with his new environment. It is said that a greyhound will immediately find the softest spot in the house to curl up and take a nap, and this is true. If permitted, a greyhound will be comfortable on the sofa or on your bed. Unless you want your greyhound to be a furniture dog, do not permit him to lie on the sofa or your bed. Instead, show him where his bed is and take him there. Greyhounds have never been allowed on furniture, so they will not know to go there unless you allow it. Please be consistent. Your dog cannot differentiate when it is OK to get on the furniture and when it is not OK.

### **Glass doors and mirrors:**

Your greyhound may be perplexed by his reflection in the mirror. Let him explore and get used to it. The same holds true for French doors and sliding glass doors that might also show a reflection. If you have large expanses of glass, as in large windows or sliding glass doors, your greyhound may not realize this is glass and may try to run through them. This can be extremely dangerous. We always recommend that you place a strip of blue painter's tape, some decals, or post it notes at the greyhound's eye level on the glass

### **Going up and down stairs:**

If you have a flight of stairs in your home, one of the first things you will need to do is help your greyhound learn to negotiate them. Several of our foster homes have stairs, and one of the prisons has stairs. Those dogs will be familiar with

going up and down. If you have another dog in the house that is already familiar with climbing stairs, let your greyhound follow that dog for a few steps and then come back down. Hold your greyhound closely by the collar and go up and down a few steps, then try a few more until your greyhound is comfortable going up and down. For a dog, going down the stairs is more difficult than going up. This is because they will have no depth perception and think they are stepping into thin air! Hold your greyhound snugly on a short leash so he cannot jump and go down a few stairs. Once he is comfortable with this, increase the number of stairs until he is going up and down the full flight of stairs slowly and easily.

### **House training:**

On the track and at the prisons, greyhounds have the same routine every day, including their turn-out schedules. They are typically turned out into an exercise pen or walked four or five times each day. As a result greyhounds do very well with routine and the more you keep a consistent schedule with potty times, the better your greyhound will do. When he first comes to your home, your greyhound will not know how to ask to go out. This will come in time, but at first, you need to set a routine for going out. Keep this routine as close as possible to the routine used at your greyhound's foster home or prison, and slowly adjust it to your schedule. We recommend taking your greyhound out to potty when you arise in the morning. This is just a quick trip outside. Even if you have a fenced yard, we recommend for the first few days keeping your dog on a leash until he relieves himself (usually it only takes a few minutes). When he does, praise him to let him know that is what you want. Take him back inside and feed him. Most dogs will need to go back outside within 30 minutes to one hour after feeding. Take your greyhound back out after feeding—again, keep him on a leash until he has relieved himself. Take him out again at mid-day if possible, or as soon you arrive home from work. He will need another potty break after you feed his evening meal, and then a potty break before bed time. By all means, keep your schedule as consistent as possible.

Do not take your greyhound out every couple of hours on the weekends and then return to a regular schedule on Monday. Keep as close to the same “go out” schedule as you can each day. By taking your greyhound on a leash to the same spot to potty the first few days will also help him to realize this is what is expected of him, and he will learn to quickly relieve himself when taken to that spot.

At the track and at the prisons, your greyhound was used to being inactive for long periods of time. You will have to leave him to go to work or attend to other activities. This is not a problem, so long as you help your dog to understand that he has not been abandoned. Since your greyhound has spent virtually his entire life surrounded by other greyhounds, he can become anxious at first if left alone to run free in his new home. Confining your dog to a small room with the door closed may terrify him, so that is definitely not a good idea. The use of a crate or baby gate to ease the transition will help both the dog and the owner. At the

track, the greyhounds are “crate trained”, meaning that they will not soil their crates. This typically makes the house training experience an easy one for the greyhound and the owner. Once your greyhound is doing well in his crate, try leaving him in a small room with a baby gate for a short time (an hour or so). If he is OK, try it for longer periods of time (2-3 hours), then ½ day, then an entire day. You will soon have your greyhound adjusted to your schedule.

### **How to help your greyhound adjust to being alone:**

One thing you can do to help your greyhound adjust to being alone is to leave a radio on while you are away. At the racing kennels, a radio is usually playing all day. Just the sound of a human voice can go a long way to soothe an insecure dog while you are away. Keeping your greyhound occupied while you are away by use of a Kong or other interactive play toy is also highly recommended.



Catherine and Clyde waiting for their people to come home

### **Exercise Walks:**

At some point during the day, you will need to take your dog for an exercise walk or if you have a fenced yard, allow him to roam around and go for a short sprint if he wants to. Greyhounds without a fenced yard will enjoy a 25-30 minute exercise walk daily. Greyhounds are bred to be sprinters, so they have low to moderate exercise needs. This means that a short walk is normally sufficient. If you are planning on your greyhound becoming your jogging partner, your jogs will have to be very short. Since they are sprinters, greyhounds have no stamina. If you like to walk and want your greyhound to adjust to longer walks, this will need to be done over a period of time. Start with ½ mile, then ¾ mile, then a full mile, etc.



These greyhounds were all Irish greyhounds that have graduated from the prison program and were adopted. They are: Teasy, Calahan, and Hanna

**Martingale Collars:** When walking your greyhound, be sure to use your martingale collar which was provided when you adopted your greyhound. This is the only type of collar that is safe for a greyhound, since they can easily back out of a buckle collar if they become frightened. Buckle collars to hold your greyhound's tags are fine to use inside the house, just change to your martingale collar for your walk.

**Greyhounds need to be on leashes:** Greyhounds do not know what traffic is, and may be easily distracted by the new sights and sounds they will encounter on their walks. Greyhounds are sight hounds and can see far into the distance, up to  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile. It is of vital importance to always keep your greyhound on a hand-held leash when he is not in a totally fenced area.

If a greyhound were to become frightened, or even interested in an object they see and were to take off, they would be far too fast for you to catch them, (they can run almost 45 miles per hour), and they could run right across and into traffic. We also DO NOT recommend that you use retractable leashes on greyhounds. You do not have enough control of your dog, they are not safe even for a small dog, and retractable leashes can easily become entangled around you and your greyhound.

**Teaching your greyhound to come when called:** This important command is what we refer to as "come on recall", to come when you call him or her to you. It is one of the first things a greyhound is taught at the prison. He is used to coming when his trainer calls, but is not used to you. If you have a fenced yard, make it a practice of calling your greyhound by name to come to you and give him a small treat when he comes. Do this every time he is let out until he consistently comes when called. If you do not have a fenced yard, you can practice this in the house until he comes consistently when called.

With patience, consistency, and practice, your greyhound will become a wonderful family pet. Greyhounds do well with typical obedience commands. Also, greyhounds do not sit naturally because of the way they are built. We teach them to sit, but keep the time very short.

You will receive a guide to what his trainer has taught him at the prison, so follow these commands. It is a greyhound's nature to want to please you, and they thrive on your attention and love. Greyhounds are sensitive and gentle. Be kind, gentle, and calm around them and they will become wonderful family companions.



Irish greyhounds Tegan, Wexford, and Belle. All were imported from Ireland and have been adopted..