

Katherine Hays- A graduate student enrolled in the Ag. and Natural Resources Sciences Master's Program at Tarleton State University

My Knowledge of the Greyhound Industry

Since I was born, my childhood was defined by living on a greyhound farm. It is the primary distinguishing factor that sets my family apart from anyone else in the area and at school. Knowing how to care for greyhounds has shaped my life to be a little different from other people. I know more about dogs in general and can more easily identify when they are sick, injured, or lethargic than the average person. While I lived with my parents, they bred, boarded, and raced greyhounds. The main thing that my sister and I were asked to do was to feed the dogs and clean their buckets. We did this for our greyhounds, as well as for the dogs that were being boarded on the property, and our grandfather's (David Hays) whenever he asked for help or had his dogs at our farm.

Occasionally my father would ask that we assist him with administering vaccinations, clip nails, and give wormer to the dogs. I had always had a crazy fear of needles and would cry when I gave the dogs shots, so my job was usually to hold them and calm them down while my father and sister would give the vaccinations. Thankfully, I rarely had to administer any shots myself because everyone ended up annoyed at my crying, and it always took longer than if someone else had done it. This was also the case for tattooing dog's ears occasionally; I got to see how it worked, I understand it, and the need for doing this, and I helped hold and calm down the greyhounds for this as well. Despite my misgivings, I was very good at caring for the dogs during this process, and I was good at clipping their nails and not cutting to the quick! All of these things were just a tiny part of the higher level of care that greyhounds need to be afforded to be the best they can be.

When my grandfather wanted something done so he would have to spend less time on it and wanted to find a reason to give me some spare money, he would ask me to leash train his younger greyhounds or help him teach them to go into the starting box and not panic. These trainings showed how much patience is required for this industry and gave more lessons on pacifying animals in fear.

I did not go to the track very often because of school, and when I was younger, it was easier for my mother to watch my sister and me at home. However, over the years, I have been to the track quite a few times in total and have seen how my family's hard work paid off. From those times, I helped get the dogs on and off the track, and helped take them to the holding pens and back in the truck before and after the races, and cleaned up the pens when we were done. I can surmise my knowledge of the greyhound industry by saying I know the differences between caring for greyhounds compared to regular dogs raised as pets (as we had both). I know of the hard work and energy spent on trying to get the dogs the best they can be, whether it be for racing or making sure the dogs are kept in the best shape for breeding. It was a great set of experiences for later in life to know how to care for animals to this higher degree.