

## Greyhounds abandoned after making millions for bookmakers



Betfair is among the bookmakers that do not contribute to the industry's voluntary welfare scheme Getty Images

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Leading gambling companies are refusing to pay into a welfare fund for greyhounds despite making millions of pounds in profits from dog racing, a Commons report says.

Betfair is among the bookmakers that do not contribute to the industry's voluntary welfare scheme, which pays to provide track safety measures and rehome retired greyhounds. Contributions to the British Greyhound Racing Fund (BGRF), which pays for welfare and prizes, have more than halved since 2008 to £6.9 million last year. Of that sum, £2.9 million was allocated to welfare.

Betting companies made a £237 million profit from greyhound racing in 2012, the last year for which figures are available. Nine out of ten British betting shops voluntarily give 0.6 per cent of greyhound turnover to the fund, but most bookmakers do not contribute any proceeds from online or overseas gambling. Betfair, BetVictor and Unibet were

among bookmakers that gave nothing, the BGRF said.

The betting industry has ballooned in the past decade and is now worth more than £11 billion. It has been strongly criticised for failing to protect problem gamblers, with the NHS administering drugs to tackle increased levels of addiction. MPs from the environment, food and rural affairs committee, whose dog racing report is released today, are calling for a statutory levy of 1 per cent of greyhound turnover to cover welfare if bookmakers continue to refuse to pay voluntarily.

More than 40,000 dogs have been injured at racing tracks in the past decade, according to figures quoted in the report. Up to 3,700 retired greyhounds are unaccounted for each year. The findings come a decade after revelations that healthy greyhounds were being systemically killed.

Betfair said that it contributed to the BGRF until 2012 but “stopped because the majority of our competitors were making no contribution on their online business”. It added: “Were we able to get to a situation where all operators were to contribute to the fund in an audited and transparent manner for their online businesses, we would reconsider.”

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