

Minister under fire over greyhound exports

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The Department of Agriculture has previously blocked plans by the IGB to send greyhounds to race in China
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The acting agriculture minister has been accused of turning a blind eye to the practice of shipping Irish greyhounds to China, where they are killed if they underperform.

Simon Coveney, who is responsible for animal welfare as part of his ministerial brief, told the Dail last week that he was aware of the conditions in Macau, the autonomous Chinese territory that is home to the Canidrome racing track, but that there was nothing he could do to stop Irish dogs being sent to China or any other country once they meet minimum certification requirements.

Aideen Yourell, spokeswoman for the Irish Council Against Blood Sports (Icabs), said that Mr Coveney was “effectively turning a blind eye to the problem”.

“If a greyhound does not finish in the top three in five races in a row, he or she is destroyed. It is reported that around 400 dogs are killed by lethal injection each year and every greyhound arriving at the track is dead within three years,” Ms Yourell said.

“There is no adoption programme at the Canidrome, so Irish greyhound owners are exporting their unwanted greyhounds to a region where there are no animal protection or welfare laws. At least nine Irish greyhounds have been shipped to this hellhole in recent weeks.”

Icabs has also criticised the Irish Greyhound Board’s policy of not intervening in the export of dogs to China. It has said that it has no remit in relation to stopping exports but that it does expect owners to “only export to destinations that provide the expected levels of greyhound care and management”.

Icabs will hold a demonstration outside the Department of Agriculture today and protests are also planned this week at the Irish embassies in London and Milan.

The Department of Agriculture had previously blocked plans by the IGB, which will receive €14.8 million in state funding this year, to send dogs to China, but the practice was never made illegal.

The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Dogs Trust, and the Irish Blue Cross have asked to meet with Mr Coveney so that they can voice their concerns about the conditions and treatments of dogs in Macau.

Two Australian airlines, Cathay Pacific and Qantas, refused to transport dogs to China after ABC, Australia’s public broadcaster, showed footage of greyhounds being put down in Macau. Australia had been the main supplier of greyhounds and the airlines’ policy is likely to lead to greater demand for Irish dogs in the country.