

## Off Leashing Your Greyhound

It's tempting to let your greyhound "have a run" after you've seen him doing zoomies around your backyard. It's very important to remember that greyhounds run at 70km per hour, and they are used to running on prepared surfaces - smooth grass or sand, without holes or rough patches, and without fences or obstacles to run into. Certainly without any traffic risk!

If being able to offleash your dog is extremely important to you, you may be better to choose a different breed that doesn't run so fast.



### Risks associated with free running greyhounds

1. Fences and other obstacles. If your greyhound is at full speed, they may not be able to stop or turn in time to avoid an obstacle. If your greyhound hits an obstacle while running, they WILL be INJURED, potentially quite badly. This can be anything from a laceration to a fracture to immediate death. I know that sounds dramatic but we have had to help people through the heartbreak of losing their new baby.
2. Traffic. If your dog can get out into traffic, they can easily be hit by a car and terribly injured. They won't stop for vehicles themselves and because they are so fast drivers have no chance to avoid them.
3. Rabbits and other fun wildlife. Even if you think you have trained recall, if your greyhound starts chasing something, they are unlikely to listen. If they are at full speed, they won't be able to hear you anyway. They will follow the rabbit where it goes and that may be through a fence or into scrub where they can become injured.
4. Falls. Especially on rough terrain, your greyhound may lose his footing while cornering (remember he has run a special prepared surface all his life). And if he falls at speed, he may be badly injured.
5. Injuries from other dogs. It is awesome to watch your greyhound run and play with his friends. It is absolutely terrible when your greyhound runs into another dog and is gravely injured. Choose your company wisely and don't play in very large areas while your greyhound is new, or if your greyhound has poor spatial awareness.

6. Getting lost. If your greyhound gets out of sight, they may not be able to find their way back. Never allow your greyhound to run anywhere they can get out of your sight. If a greyhound gets spooked they could bolt, and then you have a lost, terrified dog, out perhaps overnight, perhaps for days or weeks. People have lost greyhounds which have never been found.
7. Injuries associated with the speed greyhounds run. Greyhounds run very fast and with their whole heart. Galloping at speed puts pressure on the tendons and ligaments and other body structures. When we let them gallop at full speed in a large area, it comes with the very real risk of injury - especially if the dog is trying to chase a rabbit and doing tight corners.

You can **mitigate** some of the risk of free running a greyhound by:

1. Choosing a safe, secure paddock with good footing, and walking your dog there on multiple occasions before attempting to let him off the leash.
2. Walking the perimeter on the inside of the paddock, with your dog on a lead, before ever offleashing him in there.
3. Walking him around in the paddock for a good 15 minutes before letting him off, and making quite a bit of noise while doing so, to scare off any rabbits etc which may be lurking in the grass.
4. Choosing friends your dog knows, of a similar size, and limiting the group running to two, or four. (Don't ever run your greyhound in a group of 3). Playdates should be undertaken in small areas first until the dogs know each other well, and each greyhound in the group must be separately made aware of the fences and any hazards in the paddock you propose to use.
5. Don't off leash your greyhound until they are very definitely your dog, and you know you have a bond, and you have some recall training (even though you are in a secure area).
6. Never allow your greyhound off the lead in any paddock where they can get out of your sight.

Above all, keep safe, everyone.