

# Sighthounds and Other Dog Breeds



If you are adopting an ex-racing greyhound, it is important to be aware of their past experiences. Most pet dogs are given plenty of opportunities to interact with other dogs of various different breeds during puppyhood. This allows them to learn how to interact appropriately with (and feel comfortable around) dogs of all shapes and sizes. Without these early experiences, dogs can easily develop behaviour problems around other dogs.

Many ex-racing greyhounds have had no experience of different dog breeds at all, prior to arriving in rescue. Different breeds of dog may seem totally alien to them at first, particularly those that are visually very different to sighthounds (such as smaller breeds).

Amazingly, a large number of ex-racers are still able to interact well with other breeds almost immediately, despite missing out on this early socialisation. However, some of them may react fearfully, with over-excitement or occasionally with predatory intent when they first encounter different breeds. These dogs require careful socialisation and management around different breeds, whilst they learn about the world.



Most ex-racers respond extremely well to socialisation and training around other breeds, and will learn to feel comfortable around them in time. A small number will always need care around different breeds of dog.

## ***Reasons for dog-dog issues***

The three most common reasons for dog-dog issues in rescue sighthounds are fear, frustration and predatory behaviour. It is common to see ex-racers who are totally comfortable around other sighthounds, but who struggle when meeting different breeds.

Lurchers have usually come from either working or pet backgrounds, and have had more socialisation with different dog breeds. Like any dog, some can still struggle with fear or frustration when meeting other dogs, based on past experiences.

## ***Fear***

As mentioned above, it is very likely that your ex-racing greyhound has had very little early socialisation with different breeds of dog. Unsurprisingly, they may find these strange creatures quite frightening at first!

You may notice that your dog is reluctant to approach other breeds of dog, or attempts to avoid them. It is important to respect your dog's need for space. Bad experiences (such as having another dog run up to them off-lead, or being forced to interact with dogs which they are unsure of) can lead to the development of defensive behaviour such as barking, lunging and snapping when encountering other dogs. This behaviour is motivated by the desire to avoid other dogs, which are seen as potential threats.

## ***Frustration***

Some ex-racers may find other breeds very over-exciting, since they are so novel. These dogs are motivated by a desire to meet and interact with other dogs – but they are often lacking in social skills! They will often be very over the top, rude and boisterous when interacting with others.

This over-excitement and the resulting frustration at not being able to greet the other dog can also lead to lunging, barking and snapping at others. These dogs need help to remain calm around other dogs, and learn more appropriate social skills.

## ***Predatory Behaviour***

Ex-racing greyhounds are somewhat different to many other dog breeds, in that they are still being bred and trained for a specific job. They have been selectively bred for a high motivation to chase moving objects, and have been encouraged to do so during their racing career.

Dogs with a high prey drive who have not been well socialised may not recognise other breeds (particularly small ones) as dogs. They may even view them as potential prey animals, and attempt to chase and catch them.

Typical signs of predatory behaviour when encountering another dog can include:

- Intense staring
- Stalking/slow movement
- Tense body posture
- Trembling
- Inability to look away from the dog/take treats
- Lack of social signals (such as tail wagging, attempts to sniff)
- Lunging
- Whining/squealing/barking
- Attempts to grab/bite the other dog

If your dog is showing predatory intent towards other dogs, there is a risk that they may attempt to chase and catch them if given the opportunity. It is important to be mindful that as well as the drive to chase, these dogs also have the physical speed and strength to seriously injure another dog should they be motivated to do so.

## ***Managing dog-dog predation***

For the reasons explained above, adopters of ex-racing greyhounds have a responsibility to keep both their own dog and other dogs safe.

If you suspect that your dog may have any predatory intent towards other dogs, or you are at all unsure of how they will respond to other breeds, you must **always use a properly fitted muzzle and keep them on-lead when in public.**

Since sighthounds are notoriously good at escaping from walking equipment, we also advise using a double ended training lead (attached to both a walking collar and a harness). Remember that a muzzled dog can still cause blunt force injury to a small dog if allowed off-lead.

If you believe your dog may be showing signs of dog-dog predation, please get in touch with us immediately for help and advice.

## ***Responsible greyhound ownership***

We always advise using a muzzle and lead during walks for at least the first six weeks after adopting your new dog, regardless of whether or not they have shown any predatory intent towards other breeds. This is because your dog is still learning about the world, and you are still getting to know your dog and how they will respond in any given scenario.

Be aware that your new dog may not always immediately recognise smaller dogs as dogs, even if they have been social with them so far. Your dog may still become confused if the other dog is not familiar, is moving quickly, making a high pitched noise, or is in the distance. You should continue using the muzzle until you are totally sure that your dog will not show predatory behaviour towards another dog in any context.

All Forever Hounds Trust dogs are assessed around smaller breeds prior to rehoming, and are not adopted out until they have been able to engage in social interaction with a smaller dog. If your new dog has required extra socialisation around smaller dogs due to predatory behaviour, you will be made aware of this and provided with management advice, and a training plan to help you continue their socialisation at home.

## ***A note on muzzles***

Many people are reluctant to use a muzzle, and they can be viewed very negatively. In reality, the majority of ex-racing greyhounds are totally used to wearing a muzzle for walks, and do not find them unpleasant at all.

It is not cruel to muzzle your dog! Proper greyhound basket muzzles are designed to allow the dog to pant and drink normally, and are very lightweight with appropriate padding for comfort. If your dog is unsure about wearing the muzzle, see our "Muzzle Training" fact sheet for advice.

Try not to worry about how other people may perceive your dog whilst wearing a muzzle. The most important thing is being a responsible dog owner, and taking steps to ensure that your dog is safe around others.



## ***Changing unwanted behaviour around dogs***

**If you are having any dog-dog issues with your dog, please get in touch with us for behaviour advice.**

In order for training to be effective, it is important to identify the underlying emotions behind your dog's behaviour. Our post homing support team of qualified behaviourists can help you with this, and talk you through an appropriate training plan to address their specific needs.

Until you have spoken to one of our behaviour team, please try to avoid other dogs, and ensure that your dog is muzzled and kept on-lead in public.

The information provided in this document provides general guidance on the matters outlined and is not intended to replace the need for you to take qualified and appropriate behaviour/training advice on these matters.

Please remember, that as an owner of a Forever Hounds Trust dog you have access to our team of qualified behaviourists and FREE behaviour and training advice. No matter what your behaviour or training question is, we are here to help. You can contact the team by emailing: [behaviour@foreverhoundstrust.org](mailto:behaviour@foreverhoundstrust.org)

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