The Scream of a Rabbit
A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Greyhound Training
By Bernard M. Weller, HSUS Gulf States Field Representative

The Scene: A greyhound training track near Lubbock, Texas, at the end of the fourth race. Two boys, perhaps 10 or 11 years old, drag a screaming rabbit from the mouth of a vicious greyhound. One of the boys held the mangled rabbit by its hind legs, dripping blood before him, then dropped the animal on the ground and walked away nonchalantly. I stood there speechless and unbelieving of what I had just witnessed—children being exposed to the abominably cruel practice of a training session for dog racing called "coursing."

It was early evening when I arrived at the coursing track just outside the city limits of Lubbock. My presence at the track, which trains greyhounds for dog racing in states outside Texas, was looked upon by several people there as uneventful. I felt more than a little nervous though, after seeing several handguns and rifles lying about in tracks and dog trailers in the parking area. From my past investigative experience with HSUS, I knew my life would be in danger if any one of the approximately 25 dog owners participating in the coursing sessions discovered my identity.

I walked into the track area and discovered two race tracks that were brightly illuminated by flood lights. One was a coursing track in which dogs chase and kill free-racing rabbits. The other was a standard oval track used by professional greyhound racers. The well-groomed tracks were covered with soft, sandy loam that gives optimum traction for running dogs.

Was a 2-acre Asisfa enclosure used as a holding pen for rabbits, where several men were catching rabbits for the upcoming runs. They loaded the rabbits into wood containers and placed them near the entrance of the track.

While waiting for the first race I talked with the track owner, who informed me that coursing sessions were held twice a week on a year-round basis. He said after the dogs are trained at the track, they are sent to one of 9 states that legally sanction dog racing in the U.S. He boasted that people from all over the state had come to his track to train their dogs.

The beginning of the first session was signaled by the sound of speculators pressing themselves eagerly against a chain-link fence that lined the fringe of the dog track. Suddenly, a rabbit was released. Two greyhounds were set free on their trail as the dogs near the rabbit, it turned back toward the entrance of the track, looking for an escape. The crowd on both sides of the track roared at the rabbit to scare it back in the direction of the dogs. The rabbit ran back and forth, desperately trying to elude the dogs. I cheered inside myself when the dogs became excited and could not keep up with the rabbit. But my elation was short-lived, as a third greyhound was released onto the track. The fresh greyhound didn't waste any time. Within seconds it grabbed the rabbit. A bloodcurdling scream from the helpless creature pierced the air. The rabbit's wailing increased as all three dogs began tearing it apart.

After the dogs had mauled the rabbit for a few minutes, several young children were sent onto the track to retrieve it. One youngster grabbed the rabbit from the mouth of a dog and discovered that it was still alive. He threw the animal on the ground and stomped his boot heel.
Editors Note: HSUS has determined that activities observed by Weller violate state civil and criminal anti-cruelty laws. The HSUS Legal Department is attempting to assemble an ironclad case of cruelty to animals against the track owner. HSUS hopes to convince the county attorney's office that it has no alternative under the law except to proceed with prosecution.