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The Greyhound Health Initiative is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (ID# 46-4856918)

## WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE GREYHOUND HEALTH INITIATIVE!

In each quarterly edition we will have a summary of published medical papers (with link to full article on Members' page), medical updates, updates on the status of our programs and events and articles from contributing writers. We hope that you will find our newsletters to be educational and enlightening as well as enjoyable as we strive to keep you informed. Through its mission the Greyhound Health Initiative is committed to improving the health of sighthounds world-wide through education, research, and accessibility to proper diagnosis and treatment. Our goals will be accomplished through clinical research projects led by world renowned veterinarian Dr. Guillermo Couto, President, coupled with our outreach programs and the education of the veterinary community along with any organizations or individuals interested in the health and wellbeing of sighthound breeds.



Through our resources Dr. Couto states “we hope to promote collaboration, enhance skills, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge for best sighthound health and veterinary practices.” We invite you to visit the Greyhound Health Initiative website and familiarize yourself with our programs, benefits, resources and membership options: <http://greyhoundhealthinitiative.org>

Please make sure that you check our site frequently as we make regular updates to our Programs, Resource page, Tales page and add interesting and newly published articles. Support from our generous donors makes a difference. Your gift can make a difference to sighthounds on a global scale. Please [donate](#) today and be a hero to your hound.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who might be interested. We welcome your [feedback](#) and suggestions.

## KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE ON GHI SERVICES

The Greyhound Health Initiative opened our canine blood bank in July and have since been steadily increasing our supply of blood products to local veterinarians. Our very first customer was Riverside Animal Care Center in Dublin, OH, with whom we share our office. We have also provided life-saving blood to emergency clinics and practices as far away as Pittsburgh — and we're just getting started! We can ship anywhere in the continental United States and are launching a marketing campaign to spread the word. If you would like to tell your vet about our services, please direct them to:

<http://greyhoundhealthinitiative.org/nonprofit-blood-bank/>

or send their contact information to our Executive Director and he will contact them for you.

Our volunteer blood donors are almost exclusively retired racing greyhounds, though any larger breed of dog may be eligible, and all lead a normal, happy retirement living in their forever homes — we do not stable our donors like some blood banks. We do spoil the hounds while they are donating and offer the benefits of free regular checkups and blood work while their parents enjoy the knowledge that they are saving another dog's life. If you are interested in your dog (any breed) becoming a donor, please go to:

<http://greyhoundhealthinitiative.org/blood-bank/> for more information.

“We are very excited to bring this service to the veterinary community, to be able to assist all breeds while maintaining our focus on improving sighthound health.”

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## GREYT EVENTS UPDATE

The Greyt Escape – Kennels to Kouches has always encompassed every chapter of a Greyhounds life: birth, training, retirement and beyond for our athletes! We are enthusiastically working to create an even more dynamic and multifaceted event with some exciting changes.

Following four greyt years, the Greyhound Health Initiative and Greyhound Trust & Alliance have decided to give Greyt Escape- Kennels to Kouches a year off to update and revamp this popular event. We are working on a new location, new track, new farms and a new adoption kennel for the full Greyhound experience. We hope these new



changes will give the Greyhound community an even greater opportunity to join in this fun and educational event.

The Greyhound Health Initiative is also excited to announce that the Annual Sighthound Wellness Conference and the North American Veterinarian Sighthound Health conference will be combined in 2017 and will be held in an exciting new location.

Stay current with the [Greyhound Health Initiative](#) and the [Greyhound Trust & Alliance](#) for more details as they become available on the Annual Sighthound Wellness Conference coming in 2017 and Greyt Escape – Kennels to Kouches in 2018!

## THE GREYT ESCAPE EXPERIENCE

By William Feeman, DVM

I was privileged to have the opportunity in August to give a lecture at the Greyt Escape Sighthound Wellness Conference. What a wonderful experience to learn Sighthound medicine while socializing and networking with other Sighthound enthusiasts.



*Photo by Liz Tabor – Left to right Dr. William Feeman, Dr. Denis Beary and Dr. Guillermo Couto*

The first event I attended was the banquet dinner which was really fun. The DJ for the event was very entertaining and had me laughing out loud on many occasions. Dinner was delicious and highlighted by a fluffy cheesecake for dessert. Dr. Couto was the primary speaker and was entertaining and educational as he always is. I would tell anyone who hasn't heard him speak before that he is always worth the price of admission. The event ended with a fun auction that raised money for a greyt cause. The lecture series began on Saturday morning and ran through the afternoon. The group of speakers were fantastic! Dr. Couto always delivers educational and entertaining lectures, but I was also impressed with Dr. Gaston, Dr. Beary and Dr. McGuffin, who all presented very practical information on a variety of topics relevant to

all Sighthound owners. I greatly enjoyed giving my lecture and seeing how engaged the audience was. I truly value the opportunity to discuss Greyhound idiosyncrasies with other veterinarians and owners.

The accommodations at Oglebay were very nice and comfortable and my only regret was not finding more time to enjoy the grounds and facilities. The vendor fair had a greyt variety of Greyhound goodies, which I happily loaded up on.

Overall, my experience with the Greyt Escape was wonderful and I would highly recommend it to any Sighthound owner.

(Dr. Feeman, a guest speaker at the Greyt Escape, practices in Medina, Ohio)

## CHASE'S STORY

By Tracey Rosen



When it comes to medical issues, our Greyhound Chase (FTH Smoothtalker) specializes in being unique. In June of 2015, he was diagnosed with megaesophagus, one of only a small number of Greyhounds I've ever heard of with the condition. Megaesophagus is a generalized enlargement of the esophagus -- the muscular tube connecting the throat to the stomach --

with a decreased to absent motility. Esophageal motility is required for moving food and liquid down to the stomach. As a result of the condition, Chase found it harder and harder to keep food and water down and regurgitated frequently which could lead to aspiration pneumonia.

Because he also had hind end weakness, I decided to forego putting Chase in a Bailey Chair, a custom made chair that puts dogs with megaesophagus in a vertical feeding position. Dogs using the chair must remain in it for 20-30 minutes post feeding to allow gravity to work. I thought this would be too hard on Chase's back end, and instead sat and held him upright on the couch with me for 40 minutes after every meal.



Over time, Chase's condition continued to worsen. Out of frustration, I switched to a new vet, Dr. Inna Goncharov of

Warm Hearts Pet Hospital in Henderson, Nevada. Dr. Inna, as her clients call her, recommended we test Chase for hypothyroidism, in addition to the test for Myasthenia Gravis that I'd requested. Chase's first vet had only tested for Addison's disease, but my own research online convinced me that further testing might be useful. All of these things can cause megaesophagus, although it is often idiopathic.



Surprisingly to me, Chase's thyroid levels came back so low they barely registered. The prevailing wisdom was that Greyhounds were almost never truly hypothyroid. We started Chase on thyroid meds (Soloxine) right away.

Two days later, for the first time in our nine years together, Chase refused breakfast. Over the course of the day, he started panting which got progressively worse. By the time I got him back to Dr. Inna the next morning, Chase couldn't take a step without gasping for breath. I thought he was dying. The timing was so coincidental I thought the new medication was to blame, but Dr. Inna listened to his heart, took some blood and got some chest X-rays and came back with a different diagnosis: dilated cardiomyopathy, and a very severe case at that. She didn't explicitly recommend euthanasia, but it was pretty clear she thought the end was near. We decided to try medication to see if it helped, and she sent us home with Vetmedin, Benazepril, and a brochure for a pet cremation service – just in case he didn't survive the long Memorial Day weekend. Miraculously, Chase made it through the weekend.

The following week was the beginning of our relationship with the Greyhound Health Initiative and again with Dr. Couto. I had first heard about Dr. Guillermo Couto back in the day on the GREYTALK Forum. Back in 2009, when he was still running the program at OSU he and his team consulted with us about our girl Cosmo. The morning after Memorial Day I emailed Dr. Couto at 4:30 a.m. my time asking for a consult. Not four minutes later, he wrote back. What followed over the next few days were about forty emails back and forth between Dr. Couto and me. If he was bothered by my constant barrage of emails, he never let on. When he wasn't going to be available he



always let me know. And he always asked after Chase to see how he was doing. He also spoke at length to Dr. Inna on

several occasions as well.

Let me explain what made the consults with Dr. Couto so valuable. I had switched from Chase's first vet to Dr. Inna because, without going into details, a number of incidents had eroded my confidence in them. Having Dr. Couto, who has a lifetime of experience treating Greyhounds, consult with both me and my vet, gave me assurance that Chase was being diagnosed correctly. Dr. Couto took a look at Chase's initial blood work, which in addition to showing an extremely low thyroid, also revealed high cholesterol and anemia. I didn't know that these were symptoms of hypothyroidism, but he did, and it gave me the confidence to trust Dr. Inna's diagnosis of hypothyroidism. Interestingly, Dr. Couto told me Chase was only the 4th truly hypothyroid Greyhound he'd seen in his career.

After Chase's additional diagnosis of dilated cardiomyopathy, which is apparently also extremely rare



in Greyhounds (in 40 years of treating Greyhounds, Dr. Couto said Chase's was the first case he'd ever seen), Dr. Couto recommended further blood testing and an echocardiogram to confirm the diagnosis. Dr. Couto also worked with Dr. Inna and me to help find the right combination of medications and dosages that would give Chase the best prognosis.

Nearly five months post diagnosis, Chase is still hanging in there. He's demanding and feisty, eating well and



enjoying life. For a nearly 12 year old Greyhound, you almost wouldn't guess he was sick. Thanks to treating his hypothyroidism,

Chase's megaesophagus is in remission and he can once again eat and drink like a normal dog. His DCM is managed with medication and as a result he once again has the energy to go outside and bark at all the neighbor dogs to remind them that he's still here.

As a second opinion, Dr. Couto has been invaluable. He reviewed every test result and consulted with my vet to confirm Chase's diagnoses and come up with a treatment plan. And for me, as a pet parent, having Dr. Couto work together with Chase's vet helped give me the confidence to know that I'm doing everything possible to ensure that Chase and I have many more happy days together.

(Tracey lives in Las Vegas with her husband Jason and their four Greyhounds Chase, Reggie, Rufus and Buttercup)

## OUR SPOTLIGHT IS ON!

### Janet Shaffer



### Founder and Director of Hope for Hounds

It has been twelve years since Janet Shaffer first found the ominous lump on her 10 year old Greyhound Foxy's front leg. It was cancer, a hemangiopericytoma. After the lump was removed there was a 70% chance of the tumor recurring. Blessedly, Foxy would ultimately survive four more years living well into her golden years. But that is not the norm with canine cancers and Janet knew this. This life event was the kick start, the impetus and the first step to the beginning of a continuing journey for Janet that would change her life as well as the lives of many others, both human and sight hound.



*Foxy, 2008*

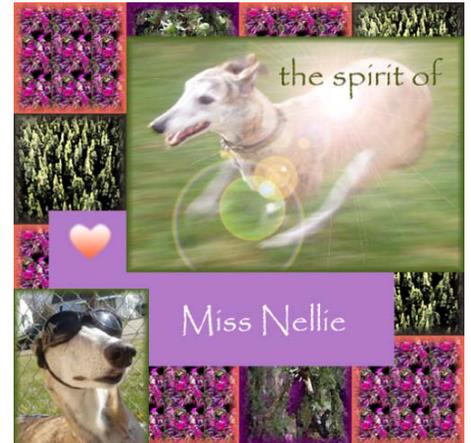
As she learned more about the cancers that affect sight hounds, she watched as many other hounds quickly lost their own battles with cancer. Janet felt compelled to do something to help. And that, she has... "Since I make jewelry for hounds, it made sense that using that skill would be the place to start. I created an Awareness Collar Bling for Hope something all dogs and their humans could wear. My intent was to raise a couple of thousand dollars. How little I understood the Greyhound owner. Within months I was run off my feet, and quickly recognized that I needed other fund raising methods" Janet recalls. From this need, [Hope for Hounds](#) was born.

"Miss Nellie was the first Greyhound I introduced on the Inspiring Stories page when Hope for Hounds began in November 2005. She captivated our hearts and took a piece of it with her. She brought people together to fight a common cause and we will continue to fight in her honor"

Janet states. And it is Miss Nellie's story and memory as well as those of the hundreds of other hounds lost to cancer that has given powerful wings to Janet's mission.

Greyhound people are a very generous and dedicated community. The call to arms was heard as word spread of Janet's objective to raise funds for canine cancer research. A large group of committed [GREYTALK](#) Forum members as usual, rose to the occasion and joined the fight with offers of help and support to what was to become known as the Miss Nellie Auction. Many of these people Janet knew personally and many more were known as internet friends. "I am never surprised by the abilities or the determination of Greyhound owners. They always rise to the challenge"

Janet says. On May 15, 2006, the first Miss Nellie Auction was begun. It was hosted on Alisha Navarro's 2 Hounds Design website. The request for donations of items for the auction had soon become an avalanche of



generosity from the GREYTALK members and Greyhound supporters from across the United States and Canada. What was thought to be only a small auction had ballooned to an auction with a multitude of Greyhound and non-Greyhound related items. That first Miss Nellie Auction would ultimately raise just over \$9,000.00 for canine cancer research.

Janet and her Miss Nellie Auction team have just completed the 10th Miss Nellie Auction with the continued enthusiasm and consistent support from the global Greyhound community with the auction being followed worldwide. Her passion and commitment for this cause is infectious and has helped not only raise awareness of canine cancers but has also brought the power of the Greyhound community to bear in fighting these cancers that affect all of our canine companions. Because of Janet, many other individuals and groups have followed her lead and have begun their own fund raising efforts to support the canine cancer research being done. Janet's perseverance and determination has paid off well as many more thousands of dollars have been raised over the last ten years. The Miss Nellie Auction will continue as one of the annual highlights of the Greyhound world, giving us all an opportunity to participate in and help a cause that has become very dear to Greyhound owners hearts.

We have all lost or known canines lost to cancers. They are Janet's family members and our family members and in this society, canine companions will always be a part of family life. It is with Janet's contagious and ongoing passion, commitment, enthusiasm and devotion to the breed and the hope of helping find a cure that keeps her and her goal in the spotlight!

As Janet reflecting on the last ten years recalls, "I made a promise to Foxy before she died that I would never stop until a cure was found. That promise to my Greyhound has led me down many paths, including my current position as Operation Programs and Fundraising Director for The Greyhound Health Initiative. It has also led me to many other people and groups who share my dedication for this cause. Together we can keep the fight for a cure going. The last ten years have been a lot of hard work and that hard work will continue and it has been well worth it. With the love for our hounds, our hope for the future and our belief in the abilities of the medical community, we WILL make a difference. And... I always keep my promises."

All monies raised by Hope for Hounds go to support the vital work done by Dr. Guillermo Couto, his colleagues and his team on behalf of sighthounds through the [Greyhound Health Initiative](#).

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## EFFECTS OF TIME OF COLLECTION AND SAMPLE PROCESSING ON VON WILLEBRAND FACTOR CONCENTRATION IN RETIRED RACING GREYHOUNDS

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L.M. Mari'n, C.G. Couto, M.C. Iazbik, N. Westendorf, and P. Vilar Saavedra

Background: Concentrations of von Willebrand factor (vWF) are less than 30% in approximately 10% of Greyhounds.

**Hypothesis:** That sample collection, processing, and storage can affect the concentration of vWF in plasma of Greyhounds.

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*From the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences (Mari'n, Couto, Vilar Saavedra), Veterinary Teaching Hospital (Couto, Iazbik, Westendorf), the College of Veterinary Medicine, and The OSU Comprehensive Cancer Center (Couto), The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. Supported in part by the Savannah and Barry French Poodle Memorial Fund.*

**Animals:** Nineteen healthy former racing Greyhounds.

**Methods:** *Prospective study:* Blood samples were obtained from the jugular vein of dogs at 4 times during the day. Samples were divided and processed in each of 3 ways. The 1st tube was centrifuged immediately, the 2nd tube was kept in a household refrigerator, and the 3rd tube was kept at room temperature for 3 hours before centrifugation and processing.

**Results:** There were no significant differences in the vWF concentration between different sample storage and processing (P55.31). There was no statistically significant diurnal variation in vWF concentration in the samples evaluated (P5.37).

**Conclusions and Clinical Importance:** Time of sample collection and short-term storage temperature do not influence the vWF concentration in retired racing Greyhounds.

**Key words:** Cold activation; Dog; Greyhound; Laboratory misdiagnosis; Preanalytical variables.

Retired racing Greyhounds have unique physiological characteristics.<sup>1</sup> We recently demonstrated that 26% of retired racers bleed 24–48 hours after routine spay or neuter procedures, despite having normal results of hemostasis assays.<sup>a</sup> In the Greyhound community (eg, adoption groups, owners, and veterinarians), a fair number of these bleeding episodes are falsely attributed to von Willebrand disease (vWD).

Von Willebrand factor (vWF) is an adhesive glycoprotein that circulates in plasma as a multimer.<sup>2</sup> vWD is the most common canine hereditary hemostatic defect, and vWF-deficient Greyhounds have been identified in breed surveys.<sup>3</sup>

Blood collection, processing, and storage can affect the concentration of vWF, sometimes resulting in an erroneous diagnosis of vWD in people.<sup>4,5</sup> Samples stored at 4°C before plasma separation yielded significantly lower concentrations of vWF than reference samples, and approximately half of normal individuals in which blood was stored at 4°C before centrifugation could have been diagnosed with type 1 vWD.<sup>5</sup> This was attributed to a "cold-activation" phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> A previous study addressed the effects of several factors associated with

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*10.1111/j.1939-1676.2008.0198.x*

sample collection on vWF concentration in dogs.<sup>4</sup> In that study, the authors found no significant differences in vWF concentration after 3–4 thawings. They found that vWF concentration was not affected by lipemia, type of anticoagulant, or centrifugation speeds. Moreover, the vWF concentrations did not differ between samples stored at room temperature for up to 8 hours before centrifugation and those centrifuged immediately.<sup>4</sup>

Only approximately 10% (22/216) of Greyhounds tested at The Ohio State University (OSU) and at the Cornell Comparative Hemostasis Laboratory had concentrations of vWF below 30% (data not shown). We hypothesized that the low vWF concentration obtained in Greyhounds is mainly preanalytical variations that occur *ex vivo*, and it is due to sample collection, handling, or processing.

## Materials and Methods

A group of 19 clinically healthy former racing Greyhounds participating in the OSU spay/neuter program between November 2006 and January 2007 were evaluated. There were 8 intact males and 11 intact females, and their ages ranged from 1 to 8 years (mean = 4 years). The Greyhound spay/neuter/dental program has an active animal use protocol approved by ILACUC.

Blood samples were collected from the jugular vein through a clean and quick venipuncture, with a sterile disposable 20-G needle attached to a 10-mL disposable syringe.<sup>b</sup> Samples were obtained at 4 different times of the day, (ie, at 6:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 6:00 PM, and 12:00 AM); the samples obtained at 12:00 PM were aliquoted into 3 tubes containing 3.2% sodium citrate (2.7mL each), and processed as follows. The 1st tube (ie, reference sample) was centrifuged immediately (1500 x g for 15 minutes) and the plasma was transferred to polypropylene transfer tubes and frozen immediately at -20°C for analysis. The 2nd tube was kept in a refrigerator (at approximately 4°C), and the 3rd tube at room temperature for 3 hours before centrifugation and processing. We elected to use these storage methods and times to mimic what a veterinary practitioner may do after collecting a blood sample for vWF analysis (eg, place it in the refrigerator or leave it on the countertop before centrifugation). The samples collected at 6:00 AM, 6:00 PM, and 12:00 AM were processed as the reference samples.

vWF concentration was measured at the Comparative Coagulation Section,<sup>c</sup> as previously described<sup>6</sup> using an ELISA configured with monoclonal anti-canine vWF antibodies; the intra-assay coefficient of variation (CV) was 6.3%, and the interassay CV was 7.8%, as reported previously.<sup>6</sup> All samples were analyzed within 30 days of collection. The vWF concentrations of the reference samples were compared with the samples kept under refrigeration and at room temperature before centrifugation by a Student's paired T-test (results were normally distributed); the results of vWF concentration at

6:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 6:00 PM, and 12:00 AM were compared using ANOVA for repeated measures. All results are reported as means ± standard deviations. Significance was set at <0.05. Graph Pad Prism software<sup>d</sup> was used for statistical analysis.

## Results

There were no significant differences in the vWF concentration between the reference samples and the samples stored under refrigeration or at room temperature for 3 hours before plasma separation (P=.31) (Fig 1). There was no statistically significant diurnal variation in vWF concentration in the samples evaluated (P=.37) (Fig 2).

## Discussion

Short-term sample storage at low temperature led to the potential misdiagnosis of vWD in humans, apparently due to a “cold activation” phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> However collection and sample preparation (storage time, freezing, and thawing) did not affect vWF concentrations in dogs.<sup>4</sup> Samples intentionally subject to hemolysis by freezing have lower mean vWF concentration.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to previous studies in humans, we demonstrated that the vWF concentration in retired racing Greyhounds does not vary when the samples are stored at different temperatures.

In humans there are circadian variations in fibrinogen, D-dimer, C-reactive protein, tissue plasminogen activator antigen (t-PA), and vWF concentrations; and seasonal variations in t-PA and vWF.<sup>7</sup> We did not find a diurnal variation in vWF concentration in retired racing Greyhounds in this study.

A large Greyhound adoption program (National Greyhound Adoption Program—NGAP—Philadelphia) documented that 32% of 486 Greyhound plasma samples centrifuged at room temperature, reportedly within an hour of collection, and evaluated between February 2000 and May 2001 at the Cornell Comparative Hemostasis Laboratory, had concentrations of vWF below 50% (Wolf, personal communication). The high proportion of dogs with low vWF in the NGAP samples was likely due to other preanalytical variables, such as hemolysis or sample clotting. The results of our study indicate that time of collection or cold activation did not influence the vWF concentration in retired racing Greyhounds.

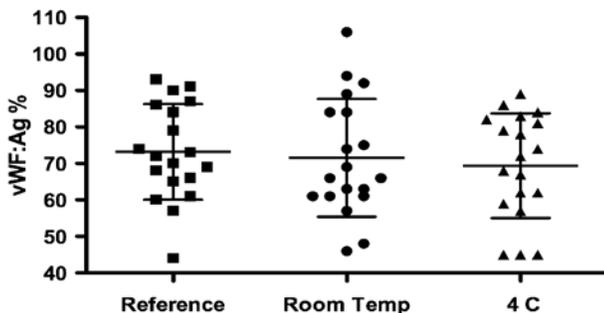


Fig 1. The dot plot distribution depicting the effects of storage temperature on von Willebrand factor (vWF) concentration in canine plasma. There were no significant differences in the vWF concentration between the reference samples and the samples stored under refrigeration or at room temperature for 3 hours before plasma separation ( $P=.31$ ) Lines represent mean SD.

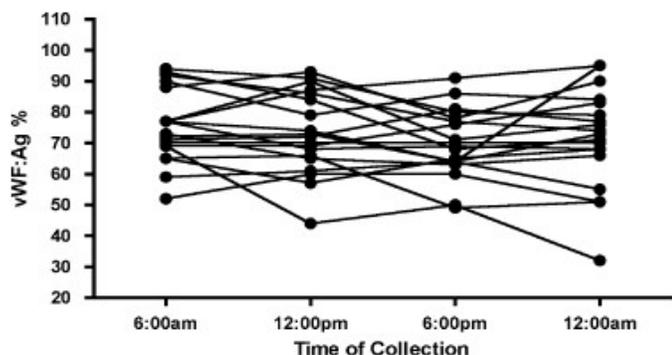


Fig 2. Graph of diurnal von Willebrand factor (vWF) concentration in canine plasma. There was no statistically significant difference in means at the 4 time points ( $P=.37$ ).

**Footnotes**

- <sup>a</sup> Garcia A, Couto CG, Iazbik MC, Brooks MB. Hemostasis assessment of postoperative bleeding in retired racing greyhounds. *J Vet Intern Med* 2007;21:575 (abstract)
- <sup>b</sup> Kendal, Monoject, Mansfield MA
- <sup>c</sup> Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
- <sup>d</sup> Graph Pad, San Diego, CA

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**TO OUR READERS**

We value your feedback and suggestions.

Is there something about Greyhound Health Initiative that you would like to learn more about?

Are there topics you would like to see covered or updated?

As we advance with the Greyhound Health Initiative Newsletter, we would like to hear any ideas and suggestions that you have.

Please feel free to [contact us](#) with your feedback.

