

IMPORTANT MEDICAL DISTINCTIONS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GREYHOUNDS

COMPLETE BLOOD COUNTS -- There are blood parameters that are slightly different in greyhounds and should be evaluated with caution. The red blood cell values of greyhounds are typically higher than normal and their white blood cell and platelet numbers lower than normal. This is a good argument for having baseline blood values performed on your greyhound so you know what is normal for him.

SERUM CHEMISTRY -- Greyhounds often have slightly higher than normal creatinine and blood urea nitrogen values. These blood parameters can be used to help evaluate the kidneys. A urinalysis should be performed, and if the specific gravity is normal, your greyhound does not have a kidney problem. We also see low protein levels in greyhounds without any underlying disease process.

THYROID LEVELS -- Greyhounds tend to have low thyroid levels, and this can be difficult to interpret. Is the dog showing clinical signs of thyroid trouble? Does your grey have a poor coat of hair? Is he lethargic? The bald-thigh syndrome in racing greyhounds is not necessarily from hypothyroidism, and the hair grows back after the dog has retired. One way to determine if a greyhound needs a thyroid replacement medication is to obtain a baseline thyroid panel. If there are low values and the dog is showing clinical signs, thyroid replacement hormone should be given. After 6-8 weeks, the panel should be repeated. If the values go up and the clinical signs improve, then thyroid replacement is indicated long-term.

CHEST RADIOGRAPHS -- We all know that greyhounds have big hearts! But if a radiograph is taken of your greyhound's heart and it appears enlarged, it may actually be normal. If your dog shows no other clinical signs--such as abnormal heart rate, coughing, exercise intolerance, his heart is probably fine.

ANESTHETIC DRUGS -- Many greyhound owners are terrified of general anesthesia. We have been told about how sensitive greyhounds are to anesthetic and that they are sometimes underdosed. Greyhounds are

different, but only slightly so. The issue of sensitivity to anesthetics likely arose because the older drugs that were used (thiobarbituates, etc.) needed more body fat than greyhounds have to be used safely. The recommendation today is to use a combination of valium and ketamine, maintaining them on isoflurane gas, and using propofol for more critical cases. Also important in ensuring a safe anesthetization and recovery is an adequate preanesthetic protocol (or treatment), such as acepromazine or domosedan. Otherwise your dog could wake up thrashing and go into a syndrome called malignant hyperthermia. A dog with this will experience a sudden extreme rise in body temperature, which can be fatal. Don't be afraid to ask your vet what drug protocol he is using and be sure to have a blood workup done before anesthesia.

HEARTWORM PREVENTATIVE -- Every dog should be on heartworm preventative and should have a yearly heartworm test. Interceptor, Heartgard, Sentinel, and Revolution are all safe for greyhounds. Do not use ivermectin products formulated for cattle or horses. The margin of safety is very low, and safe dosing is difficult.

FLEA AND TICK CONTROL -- The newer generation products are safe with greyhounds. Frontline Plus, Sentinel, and Revolution are all safe. Permethrin-containing products such as Advantix are safe for greyhounds but not for cats. Accidental application or contact with cats can be fatal.

NSAIDS -- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are used for acute pain such as surgery and dental procedures, or chronic pain such as arthritis or cancer. Greyhounds tolerate these medications well. We do advise staying with drugs approved for veterinary use such as Rimadyl, Deramaxx, and Metacam. These drugs are easier on the stomach and are more effective than aspirin. As with any long-term med, monitor kidney and liver function once a month.

--by Dr. Mary Sue Lux, excerpted from "Just How Special Are Greyhounds?" -- *Skinny Newsletter*, Fall 2003.