



What is 'Prey drive'?

'Prey drive' means an animal's natural instinct to want to chase/kill animals they see as prey (for food in order to survive). This instinct is seen in many breeds of dog (and other animals), but it is more common in sighthounds, such as Greyhounds, Whippets, Salukis etc. Most dogs have a natural instinct to chase prey, the difference with Greyhounds is that they are actually fast enough to catch their prey, rather than just chase it ineffectively.

Greyhounds (like many dogs) can show prey driven behaviour towards small animals like cats, rabbits, chickens etc and also small dogs if they do not realise it's a dog, often due to only seeing other Greyhounds while in racing/retirement kennels.

Some Greyhounds can be taught to recognise these animals as fellow pets and not prey, but this can take time and requires careful introductions using a lead, muzzle and positive training in a controlled environment and in the case of very highly prey driven hounds it often isn't achievable at all.

While a Greyhound may live happily with small pets in their own home, they can still show prey driven behaviour towards other small animals in different environments, like in the garden or park. We always try to assess the dogs in our care with other breeds before they are homed so we can inform their adopters where care / positive training may be required around other animals.

The 'training' involved in Greyhound racing does not refer to making a Greyhound chase on the track, a Greyhound's want to chase is a totally natural instinct that most will do willingly. A Greyhound can NOT be forced to chase, they do it instinctively when seeing objects, they class as prey move quickly, like the lure at the race track or things they see out on walks like cats, small dogs, squirrels etc. In the case of very highly prey driven dogs even other things that move like leaves, plastic bags and traffic can trigger predatory behaviour.

It is almost impossible to 'train' a natural prey drive out of a sighthound, but it is possible to calm down their reactivity to small animals with patience and positive training.

Prey drive should NOT be punished, but instead handled with understanding and positive reinforcement.

Prey drive is one good reason why a muzzle should be used until you know your Greyhound is ok with small dogs. It is also why a solid and reliable recall should always be achieved before even thinking about allowing them to be let off of their leads in open spaces (bear in mind that some Greyhounds will never learn recall or be allowed off their leads due to prey drive, previous injury or nervousness so please be sure to listen to your adoption groups guidance and advice.