

How Does My Whippet Become a Racing Whippet?

Before a whippet can officially qualify to race, they must be comfortable:

a) Wearing a muzzle; b) Wearing silks and; c) Exiting the racing boxes; and d) be over 12 months of age

Until this time, whippets aged 9 months and over are encouraged to trial until all three of the above criteria are met.

1) Where do I get the muzzle from?

You can purchase a wire muzzle from the canteen for \$15. Our Vice President Philip Brough also sells plastic muzzles for \$10 each. It's a great idea to have your dog wearing these from the start where possible because it means less damage to the lure and reducing the risk of damage to fellow competitors on the track.

2) Why does my whippet have to look like a jockey?

While whippets were originally known as the 'poor man's greyhound, the silks are used as identification markers. The following colours correlate to the following starting positions:



The silks allow the judges to correctly identify the winning dog more easily or in less fortunate situations, to identify racing indiscretions on the track. The club has spare silks which qualifying dogs can wear for no extra cost to acclimatise the dog to wearing the garment. It is also a good idea to ensure your dog is wearing silks which closely fit them. After all, no one wants to be slowed down out there by baggy silks!

3) Okay so I have the muzzle...and the silks...but my dog is petrified of those boxes. Help!

It is really important not to rush your dog to the qualifying stage! Don't be disheartened if your whippet takes a little longer to get used to the boxes. Some dogs will turn around in an effort to see their owners, this is quite normal. However, we want all dogs to be facing forward to maximise their chances of getting a great start – so here's how to build up to a great starting position:

1. **Hand-slip your dog:** This means holding the dog outside the boxes, and letting them go when the lure zooms past. Once the dog is confidently running the full distance of the track, progress to Step 2.
2. **Run the dog through an open starting box:** Usually racing dogs will be enclosed in the boxes; however you want both the front and back doors open. Stand your dog inside the cavity of the box, holding on to the dog tightly as in hand slipping. The noise of the lure will alert the dog and because the front gate is open, they'll see it – now let the dog go!
3. **Enclosed boxes:** Your whippet should be muzzled and in silks at this stage. It may take a few tries before the whippet knows to face forward according to the sound cues from the lure. As your whippet's racing prowess develops, it will become accustomed to the confines of the box and the sound of the lure and be raring to go.

It is worth repeating again – these steps should be taken slowly and repeated as often as it takes. The danger of pushing the dogs too far too soon is that the whippet will become frightened of the box and flatly refuse to go in it, thereby delaying its qualifying trial. A thrashing, panicked whippet can cause damage to itself and to you the owner – and **is not** something the club wants to see at ANY time.

Remember, help and coaching is always on hand every race meet.

With patience and encouragement, your whippet will be a racing wonder in no time!