



Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

Primary Resources:

Greyhounds for Dummies – page 53 – Surviving the First Night
Adoption Handbook – page 5

Dear Adoptive Family,

I confess, I have sleep startle! And I need to have my boundaries respected... I'm a retired racer named "YourNewGreyhound". I'm here to teach you about "sleep startle" And my need for space. These needs are very common to new greyhounds (or other canines). In the Retired Racing Greyhounds for Dummies book they call it "sleep aggression" (page 53, last paragraph).

But I am not aggressive at all, even though I have these characteristics, so I prefer the word "startle". I don't mean to hurt anyone. I have to take you way back to our days in the racing kennels to explain. A racing greyhound is given his own space: a kennel, cage, crate, whatever you prefer to call it. It is our safe spot. And it is **TOTALLY OURS**. We sleep and eat in it. The thing we like best is that we can close our eyes and sleep and sleep and sleep. Undisturbed!

Greyhounds love to run, but we also love to sleep! A lot! In our kennels, we can totally let our guard down. We don't have to watch to see what or who is coming. So greyhounds at the racing compound are safe, secure, happy at rest in our crates. By the time the kennel workers arrive early in the morning to turn us out and feed everyone breakfast, we are wide awake. Mister I'mALoudMouth hears the truck pull up and he will be the one that starts us barking to greet the kennel people. (We figure a loud hello deserves a good breakfast!) So no one ever gets anywhere near our kennels when we are asleep. We are wide awake.

During the day, if we doze off, our kennel workers are very savvy to wake us up before reaching into our crates. We never wake up with a human hovering over us while we lay on our dog beds. So a retired racing greyhound that is fresh off the racetrack is not used to being touched when asleep. Some will outgrow it. But that is one reason why some adopted greyhounds prefer to have a crate, or a designated "safe bed" that we can retreat to. The crate door can be left open, so that we come and go as we please. But the rule is that **NO ONE touches us** when we are in that spot. This is a "must teach" for children, and also for adults, especially the smothering kind....You see, I bit my Forever Friend on his finger. I hurt him. I had no idea, it was a reaction. My new best friend is a big dog lover and he was so excited to greet me. He doesn't know yet to respect our space. He is new to greyhounds. I was sound asleep and he lovingly scratched my whiskers. It **STARTLED** me! So I growled, snapped and actually bit him. I'm sorry. That's not me. It is just my instinct....

So let me warn all adopters, especially when your greyhound first goes home. Give us dogs **TIME** and **SPACE** to adjust. (Even if we were first fostered in a prison or a home.) Please stay off our



beds. We will get up and greet you when we are ready. Don't be so quick to try to show us how much you love us. In time we will learn we can trust you. We have a lifetime together now!!!

All this does not mean we had a rough life at the race track. We didn't. It just means that life is different, and I am sharing my house with people now. And please, no hands or fingers reaching into our crates. So if we are asleep, wake us up first with a loud clap, or foot stomp, or rattle the crate. Call our name. (We can sleep with eyes part way open too.) The most startling thing is to be touched when asleep! And until I really know you, please give me extra space. Let me come to you at first, rather than approaching me. Grab a leash if you want me to move...Now I'm going to go make amends with my New Best Friend today. I know that neither of us meant any harm, we are both just learning about the other.

Love,
YourNewGreyhound (Status: recently adopted)