



**An Bille um Shláinte agus Leas Ainmhithe
(Cosc ar Chúrsáil Giorriacha), 2020
Animal Health and Welfare
(Ban on Hare Coursing) Bill 2020**

*Meabhrán Míitheach
Explanatory Memorandum*



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EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Background

Animal welfare groups have long campaigned for the banning of the barbaric and cruel practice of Hare Coursing in Ireland. Such a ban has twice been proposed to the Dáil previously, firstly by Tony Gregory TD in 1993 and then by Maureen O’Sullivan TD in 2016.

Purpose of the Bill

The purpose of the Bill is to ban hare coursing on the grounds of animal health and welfare. It proposes to amend animal welfare Acts, in particular the Wildlife Act 1976, and to make consequential and other amendments to the Greyhound Industry Act 1958 relating to hare coursing.

Hare coursing with dogs is banned in a number of other jurisdictions, including Scotland (Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002), England and Wales (Hunting Act 2004) and Northern Ireland (Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011). Other than where provided for by the Wildlife Act 1976 and subject to licences having been granted to certain coursing clubs to net and tag hares under that Act, hare coursing is already banned in Ireland by that Act.

Provisions of the Bill

Section 1 provides for the banning of hare coursing.

Subsection (1) defines a “hare coursing event” as meaning a competition or other event in which dogs are, by the use of live hares, assessed as to skill in hunting hares. It includes competitive hare coursing as well as other events, such as participation in training exercises involving the coursing of live hares.

Subsection (2) provides that no hare coursing event shall take place after the commencement of *section 1* (see *section 6(6)*).

Subsections (3) and *(4)* provide for circumstances in which an offence may be committed (*subsection (3)*) and for penalties (*subsection (4)*). A class A fine is one that does not exceed €5,000, see Fines Act 2010.

Subsection (5) provides for offences by a body corporate or by any person who is a director, manager, secretary, member of the committee of management or other controlling authority of the body concerned (whether that body is corporate or unincorporate).

Sections 2 and 3 make consequential amendments to the Wildlife Act 1976 and to section 12 (prohibition of animal cruelty) of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 by removing the exemptions for hare coursing from certain provisions of those Acts.

Section 4 amends section 8 (regulations regarding welfare and related matters) of the Welfare of Greyhounds Act 2011 by removing permissive provisions relating to live hare coursing and providing a cross reference to lure coursing in section 26(1C)(b) (proposed to be inserted by *section 5* of the Bill) of the Greyhound Industry Act 1958.

Section 5 and the Schedule to the Bill provide for amendments to the Greyhound Industry Act 1958 (Act of 1958).

Subsection (1)

Proposes at *paragraph (b)* to amend section 26 of the Act of 1958 by providing that the constitution of the Irish Coursing Club (the 1958 version of which was scheduled to that Act)—

- shall be read subject to the proposed Act and that the Club shall take all such steps as may be necessary to duly alter its constitution so as to make it consistent with the proposed Act, and
- may be duly altered so as to enable the Club to support, foster and develop lure coursing in respect of greyhounds or other sighthound breeds of dogs or any class or classes of such dogs, including any class or classes of crossbreed of such dogs; this provision is discretionary and no obligation would be imposed on the Club to so provide and the Club may do so in whole or in part or not at all.

Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) provides for a reference to lure coursing in the definition of “greyhound race” in section 2 of the Act of 1958.

Subsection (2) and the Schedule provide for consequential amendments to the Act of 1958 as a consequence of the ban on hare coursing in the proposed Bill.

Section 6 (short title, collective citations, constructions and commencement) are standard form provisions. With the exception of section 5(1), which would come into operation on the passing of the proposed Act, the remainder would come into operation 12 months after the date of its passing or on such earlier date as the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine may by order appoint (*subsection (6)*).

Paul Murphy, TD, Mick Barry, TD, Richard Boyd Barrett, TD, Gino Kenny, TD, Brid Smith, TD, Catherine Connolly, TD, Joan Collins, TD.

Meán Fómhair, 2020.