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NEW RESEARCH REVEALS BRITAIN'S OBSESSION WITH PETS

New research published today by the Retired Greyhound Trust (RGT) and coach operator, Greyhound UK, proves that Britain is a nation of animal lovers. But despite this the charity revealed figures which show more than 1,000 greyhound dogs need loving new homes.

Former European and Commonwealth 400m Champion Iwan Thomas joined forces with Greyhound UK and its new charity partner, the RGT, to help home retired greyhounds.

According to the survey, 77% of pet owners think of their pet as an additional member of the family. More than a quarter (29%) of pet owners think referring to themselves as 'Mummy' and 'Daddy' when talking to their pets is acceptable, while 32% said that including their pet in a family photo is acceptable.

From snuggling up on the sofa (60% of pet owners said that allowing a pet on the family couch is acceptable), to settling down for a night's sleep (36% said it's acceptable to allow their pet on their bed), Britain's pets seem to enjoy a pampered lifestyle. And more than a quarter (27%) of owners admitted that it was acceptable to take their pet on holiday.

Almost a quarter (24%) of pet owners said it's acceptable to hold a funeral or burial ceremony for their pet, while one in seven (13%) said that planning to leave provisions in their will for their pet is acceptable.

The survey was jointly commissioned by the RGT and Greyhound UK, the luxury, low cost coach operator. Greyhound UK has partnered with the charity to raise awareness of the hundreds of greyhound dogs that are without homes in the UK today.

Representatives from the two organisations were joined at Wimbledon dog track today by Iwan Thomas. He became the latest celebrity to pledge support for the Retired Greyhound Trust, following fashion icon Twiggy.



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“I’m a huge dog lover,” said Iwan. “Greyhounds are wonderful dogs so it’s great to see a company of the stature of Greyhound get behind such a worthy charity. I would urge anyone who is considering a dog to think greyhounds – I certainly hope to adopt one in the next few months.”

Ivor Stocker from the Retired Greyhound Trust said: “It’s clear from the survey that Britain is a nation of animal lovers. However, despite greyhounds being incredibly loving and easy to look after (two 20 minute walks per day) we still have so many that need homes.

“I hope that by working with the world’s most famous coach brand, Greyhound UK, we can better support our wonderful network of volunteers and encourage more people to consider providing a home for these beautiful dogs,” he added.

Managing Director of Greyhound UK, Alex Warner, said: “The iconic, sleek, Greyhound logo is one of the most recognised in the world. In the UK, we want to give something back to our four legged friends that have done so much for our business. We are proud to adopt the Retired Greyhound Trust as our official charity partner for 2011.”

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For further information, please contact Niall Dowds, FirstGroup PR Manager, on 07860 936671 or email niall.dowds@firstgroup.com or Helen Barklam, Retired Greyhound Trust, on 01772 785392.

NOTES TO EDITORS

GREYHOUND UK

- Greyhound is owned by FirstGroup, Britain’s largest bus and rail operator. FirstGroup purchased Greyhound in 2007 and has been operating the company in the US and Canada since then.
- FirstGroup brought Greyhound services to the UK in September 2009 operating between the Solent and London.
- Greyhound UK currently operates services to London from Portsmouth, Fareham, Southampton, Bournemouth, Winchester, Poole, Ringwood, the Isle of Wight. Greyhound also operates services between Cardiff and Swansea and a sleeper service between Glasgow and London.
- Greyhound offers unrivalled product and service quality with a large range of cheap fares starting from £1, plus 50p booking fee, on www.greyhounduk.com.

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- Onboard features include leather seating, free wi-fi, power sockets, air-conditioning and complimentary newspapers. Greyhound coaches have 41 seats rather than the 50 or so typically operated by other coach companies meaning 20% more leg room for customers.
- All the Greyhound UK coaches have names with the theme being women's names from popular American songs. The coaches are called: Sweet Caroline, Proud Mary, Mrs Robinson, Good Golly Miss Molly, Barbara Ann, Billie Jean, Jolene, Peggy Sue, Mandy, Sharona, Sherry, Long Tall Sally, Hello Dolly and Suzy Baby.
- In the USA and Canada, Greyhound offers the only countrywide network of coach services. Celebrated in film and song for nearly a century, Greyhound has become the most famous bus brand in the world.
- To reserve seats, check fares, timetables, destinations, latest news or for more information visit www.greyhounduk.com

RETIRED GREYHOUND TRUST

- RGT homed more than 4,200 greyhounds in 2010, which was more than 12% down compared to 2009.
- The charity has housed more than 50,000 dogs since it was set up in 1975. Around 9,000 greyhounds retire from racing each year.
- The Retired Greyhound Trust has 72 branches across the country made up of volunteers who are dedicated to finding homes for the dogs in their areas. Many have websites, showing pictures of the dogs that need homes.
- To adopt a greyhound or to find out more about the Trust, tel: 0844 826 8424 or visit www.retiredgreyhounds.co.uk.

IWAN THOMAS

- ... is arguably the finest 400m runner that Britain has ever seen. He is a former European Champion, Commonwealth Champion, World Cup Winner and current British record holder.

YUGOV SURVEY

- All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2030 adults, of which 1057 were pet owners. Fieldwork was undertaken between 11th - 14th February 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).