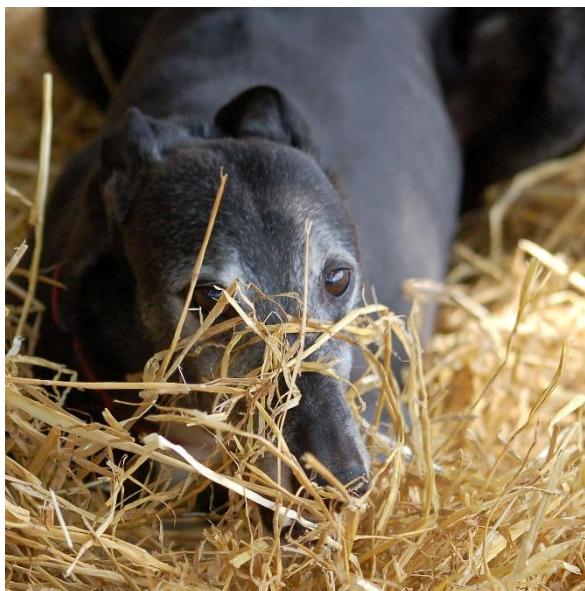


Sleep tight darling Ritz



Our darling 'Ritz' fell into a deep sleep in his bed and sadly, passed away today (Saturday 2nd January). He was a very gentle, loving, impish 10 year old lad with a unique little lion's mane of fur on the back of his neck who touched the hearts of everyone he met. He was one in a million and will be so very much missed.

He came into us at 'WGW' at eight years old with his partner, 'Lily', who he had always shared a kennel with during their racing career in Oxford. At their age, this made them more difficult to home and so we took them into the Sanctuary.

Although not previously socialised with other breeds, they both proved to be exemplary hounds who were perfect on the lead and delightful with other breeds, and so we were

hopeful they would be homed together, even though they were Sanctuary dogs, as we never give up on any hound potentially finding their forever home beyond the kennels. Whilst their forever home together never came, they had lovely walks and trips to the park and woods together and were always very happy together in their Sanctuary home and brought so much joy to everyone who knew them.

Although the same age, 'Ritz' was always more physically restricted with ongoing corn problems, which although treated, kept coming back. However, he still lived for his walks - it just meant he was less likely to be selected for homing, given his age too.

During the last few months, 'Ritz' seemed to age more significantly than 'Lily'. She was able to go on longer walks than Ritz because his stamina was less than hers, and it didn't seem fair that he would exhaust himself otherwise trying to keep up with her, as he was still always so desperately young at heart. He would therefore be able to better enjoy his walks too, if he went on his own, especially as he loved to take his time and stop and sniff at every leaf and bush.

He had a lovely Christmas and New Year with his own Christmas stocking of treats generously donated from his favourite sponsors and walkers and thoroughly enjoyed his daily walks, paddocks and adventures for which we are all truly grateful.

Even on what would turn out to be his final morning, he was leaping around in the paddock, barking his head off at the dogs in the adjoining paddock and just being his usual happy self. When he turned his nose up at his chicken mince and pasta breakfast, (not unusual for an older hound), I cooked him his favourite

meat and mixed it into his breakfast. He had clearly been holding out for his favourite food and cleared his bowl, so was obviously not feeling poorly.

He marched straight onto his kennel bed from his paddock and I sat on the edge of his bed and we had our usual daily kissing game. He would lick my head and try to lick my face and I would kiss his nose and tell him how lovely and special he was. He was so much fun and always made me laugh. He snuggled down into his bedding as usual and I left him whilst I carried on looking after the other Sanctuary dogs. About an hour later I looked in on him and called his name. Unusually, he did not look up and I immediately realised darling Ritz had fallen asleep forever.

Only a week before, his partner 'Lily' had met a lovely family looking to home a greyhound for the first time. She proved to be perfect for them and although I anguished about her leaving her beloved Ritz, it was becoming clear Lily was still incredibly physically active and energetic for her age and could not lose what could be her only opportunity of a home, given Ritz was physically at a different stage in his life and home life would now be too difficult for him. Practically speaking and sad though it undoubtedly is, he would never miss what he never knew. We could not stand in the way of Lily's future and had felt it only fair to give her a chance. Ritz was given another older girl, Lou, for companionship and whilst he did seem a little puzzled by her, she did keep licking his face whenever she joined him back in the kennel after a walk or paddock and they got on fine together.

Today turned out to be bitter sweet for the Sanctuary, as the family home-trialling Lily, arrived excitedly to sign the paperwork to keep Lily as their own. I take my hat off to them for taking on an older hound but know she will be a delightful companion. They lost their small breed dog recently and decided as a family they would like to give her a chance despite her age. I know they are delighted with her happy, nosy, loving, energetic character and fell in love with her from the outset. We know she will be well looked after and deserves her chance at happiness beyond the kennels.

Desperately sad though we are to have lost our beloved Ritz, please know he too was always happy, a bit sheepish if he didn't know you to start with but extraordinarily loving, openly affectionate and cheeky to the end. We all loved and will miss dear Ritz but whilst he had slowed down, he was spared any suffering and fell into a final peaceful sleep. Goodnight Ritz. You were a truly gentle fun-loving happy hound no-one will surely ever forget.

Carol (the Sanctuary)
2 January 2016

