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DOG WORLD

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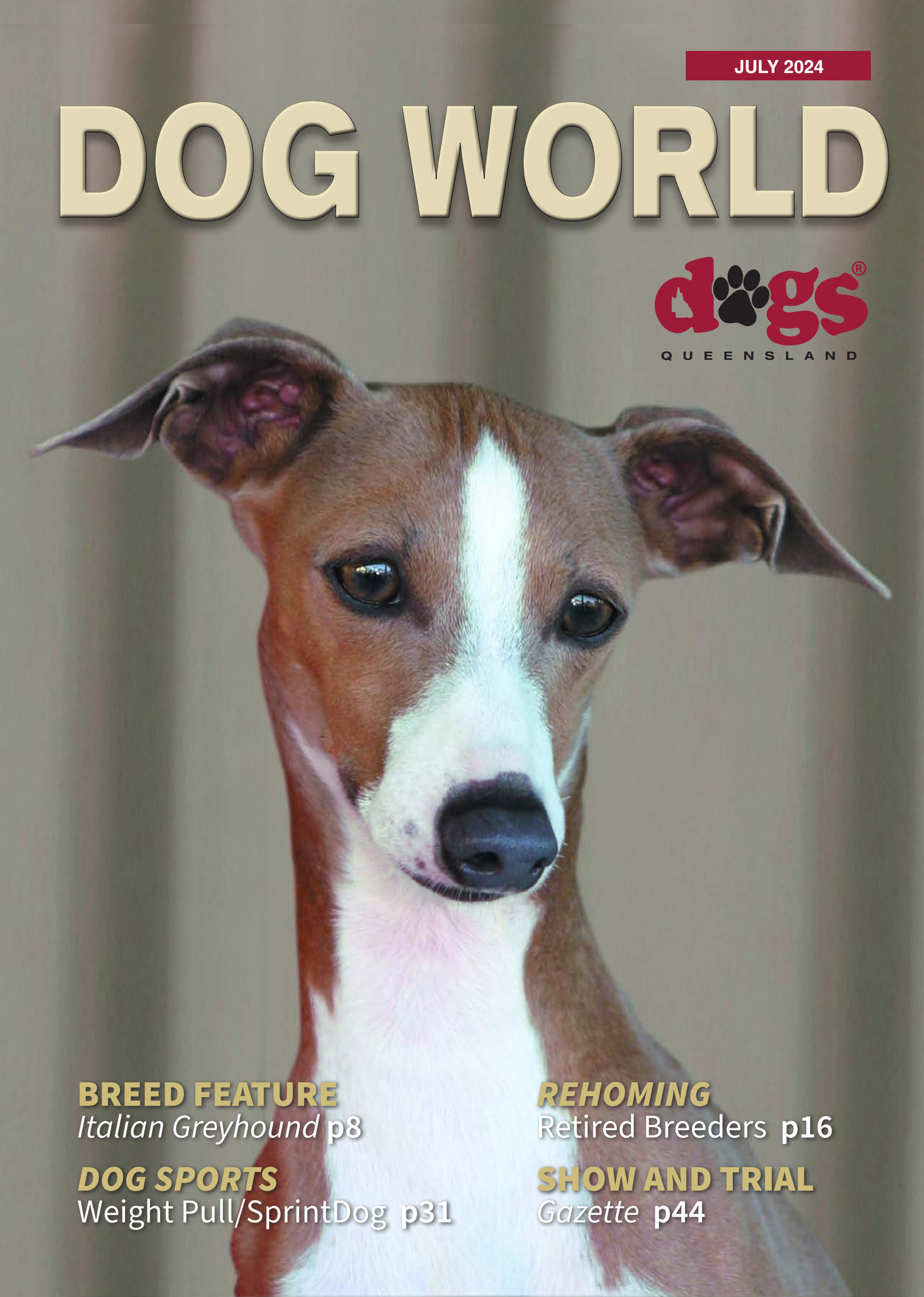

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Breed Feature

ITALIAN GREYHOUND

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Italian Greyhounds ... are affectionate, loyal, and gentle, making them great companions for individuals and families. They are also known for their intelligence and athleticism.

– Sandy Reeve: Piccino Italian Greyhounds

The Italian Greyhound is an exceptional toy breed with a charming, affectionate, and amusing personality. These tiny hounds have the ability to completely captivate their owners!

HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN GREYHOUND

Hounds similar to Italian Greyhounds are believed to have originated in Egypt around 3,000BC. Mummified remains have been excavated from the tombs of the Pharaoh's in the Valley of Kings at Luxor. It is believed that the Romans brought the hounds to the Mediterranean around 600 BC. Archaeologists have discovered art works and carvings from this period and bones of the small hounds.

In 79 AD, Mount Vesuvius erupted and obliterated the ancient Roman resort town of Pompeii. In the lava flow the remains of a petite hound were discovered. It is thought that the Latin inscription "Cave Canem" or Beware of the Dog, which was found on houses of that period, was not a warning but a reminder not to step on the miniature hound. In 48 BC Queen Cleopatra presented Julius Caesar with Italian Greyhound puppies after he had conquered Egypt.

The Middle Ages saw the Italian Greyhound in Southern Europe. Because of its popularity in Italy it became known as the Italian Greyhound and reached its height of popularity in the 17th Century. The hounds appeared in European royal houses and became a decoration of aristocratic salons. Often seen with their titled owners including; Mary Queen of Scots 1542-87, Princess Anne of Denmark 1574-1619, Charles 1 1600-49, Queen Victoria 1819-1901 and Frederick the Great of Prussia 1712-86 whose Italian Greyhound accompanied him in his military campaigns. Catherine the Great of Russia 1729-96 had her favourite Italian Greyhound "Zemira" buried in Peterhof Park and a porcelain figurine of the hound kept in the Grand Hall of the Peterhof Palace.

Italian Greyhounds can be seen in the paintings of Ambrogio Giotto 1267-1337, Rogier Van der Weyden 1399-1464, Hans Memling 1440-94, Hieronymus Bosch 1450-1516, Gerard David 1460-1523, Vittore Carpaccio 1472-1526, Sir Anthony Van Dyck 1599-1641, Sir Joshua Reynolds 1723-92, William Blake 1757-1827. Pierre Jukes Menè 1810-77 made several bronze sculptures of Italian Greyhounds. The artist Theodor Kärner 1884-1966 who worked for Rosenthal of Germany created some beautifully detailed figures of Italian Greyhounds in porcelain.

Hounds are dogs that were originally bred to hunt and the Italian Greyhound has a strong instinct to chase and hunt. The breed is the smallest of the family of sighthounds or gazehounds (dogs that hunt by sight). It is thought that they were originally bred to hunt small game as well as being a companion hound. Its larger cousin the Whippet is a relatively new breed that originated in England in the 19th Century.

Italian Greyhounds were first shown in England at the Birmingham Dog Show in 1860 and in Australia at the Sydney Royal Show in 1868. The American Kennel Club registered the first Italian Greyhound in 1886.

In St Petersburg, Russia, there is now an annual holiday held on the 27 July in honour of the Russian Empress Catherine's Italian Greyhound "Zemira". It's held in the grounds of the Grand Cascade, one of the main fountains of the Russian Versailles. A contest is held to find the most beautiful hound, which is presented with an award in the Throne Room of the Grand Peterhof Palace.

The Italian Greyhound is known in Germany as the Italianisches "Windspiel" or Toy of the Wind. In

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Italy it's a Piccolo Levriero Italiano and in Sweden an Italiensk Vinthund.

THE ITALIAN GREYHOUND

The Italian Greyhound is a greyhound in miniature. It is graceful and loving and has a variety of wonderful personality traits.

The breed is known for its lively, friendly personality and quickness to action. They have a very high prey drive and are prone to chasing small, fast-moving animals when outdoors.

The Italian Greyhound is aristocratic and has an elegant appearance with a slight arch over the loin and graceful and quick movement. This breed is intelligent, affectionate and vivacious and may appear aloof. They may be reluctant to be handled by strangers, but not to the point of being overly shy.

The head is long, flat, narrow skull with a slight stop. The jaws are strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite. It has a rose shaped ear and long gracefully arched neck. The eyes are rather large, bright and full of expression and the coat is short, fine and glossy with fine and supple skin. The chest should be deep and narrow and the back slightly arched over the loin.

Italian Greyhounds should move with a high stepping and free action and with propulsion from behind. Ideally the foreleg is lifted almost parallel to the ground. The head should be held high and the tail should be long and fine, set low and carried low.

The feet should be hare feet; a long oval foot with two middle toes longer than the others. A well-balanced Italian Greyhound should stand between 32-38cms (12.5 and 15 inches) high and the ideal weight should be 3.6-4.5kg (8-10 lbs).

Common coat colors include black, blue, cream, fawn, red, white or any of these colours broken with white. White dogs may be broken with one of these colours. Black or blue with tan markings or brindle are not acceptable.

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Overall, the Italian Greyhound should be a sleek, graceful, and well-proportioned dog. It should appear fit and energetic and demonstrate the agility, speed and grace that a good, working hound should possess. The overall impression should be of a lively and active dog that is eager to please.

PERSONALITY OF AN ITALIAN GREYHOUND

The personality of an Italian Greyhound is unlike any other breed.

They are cat-like in the respect that they enjoy sunbathing. Care should be taken that your IG does not become sunburned or overheated. A picnic-style blanket and chew toy laid out in the warmth of the sunshine in your back yard is an IG's idea of heaven.

Italian Greyhounds like to be up on high spots in your house (such as back of chairs, sofas and even on top of the dining room table). If there is a window view they are especially thrilled. Care should be taken with puppies and young adults that they are not given the opportunity to attempt daredevil stunts off the back of such things!

Getting wet is usually avoided by IGs (unless by choice) and they will refuse to do any "business" outside when raining. Some owners have built little area shelters to protect their pets from rain. This keeps the house protected from iggy (affectionate, short term for Italian Greyhound) accidents. If the grass is wet in the morning, the sidewalk will do for an IG. They are creatures of comfort. If an occasional accident in the house is unacceptable to you, the IG may not be the breed for you. Some owners have resorted to the use of a litter box. This is one breed of dog that CAN be litter box trained (like a cat). The IG litter box is larger than the kitty type and is usually lined with newspapers. When the litter box is used, training is relatively easy and accidents are rare. Litter boxes are NOT necessary to successful training, however.

These little hounds are masters at twisting owners around their paws. As a result, IGs can become spoiled-rotten rapidly and can turn into rulers of

the house! Don't forget to teach them what "no" means. However, they do prefer to be companion and friend, but not master and hound. If you are looking for a breed that will obey your every command, the IG is NOT the breed for you.

They are very adept at getting what they want and can be persistent. Be prepared to give in on many issues because they are masters at laying a guilt trip!

Curiosity and the Italian Greyhound go well together. IGs love to be in, around and on top of anything that they find interesting. If an IG decides that an object is edible he will eat it! Care should be taken to make sure that they do not get into too much trouble or into danger.

Lounging in beds, preferably under covers is a favourite pastime. Sharing the bed with you is always the best! Keeping the couch warm occupies a lot of their time. Care must be taken to not sit on a hidden IG! If you don't like sharing your bed, this may not be the breed for you.

Italian Greyhounds do love "dog company" and can get along well with other canine friends. HOWEVER, care must be taken when introducing an IG to larger dogs. A big dog can accidentally hurt an Italian Greyhound. IG's do not realize their own small size, so it is up to owners to protect them from themselves.

Cats can also be good companions to Italian Greyhounds. Many owners report IGs and cats romping merrily together through the house. One moment the IG will be racing after a cat and in the twinkling of an eye the cat will be chasing the dog! It is not uncommon to find cat(s) and IG(s) curled up together for an afternoon nap in the warmth of the sun.

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Some Italian Greyhounds are more active than others. Stuffed toys are a favourite plaything. While some IGs take good care of their possessions, others have been known to shred toy stuffing all over the house! Some IG's find the game of throw and fetch to be extremely entertaining.

Outdoor activities can include digging small (or large) holes, chasing squirrels or birds and occasionally clipping grass (which then makes them sick!). While IG's prefer the company of people while outdoors, they will investigate your FENCED back yard by themselves. An IG SHOULD NOT be left outside while you are gone. They are NOT outdoor dogs!

Your privacy will be a long forgotten memory once an IG owns you! You will find that no where in your house is there a place to hide from this inquisitive little personality. You will be followed everywhere... including the bathroom. Dinnertime is of special interest to IGs. Care should be taken in not tripping over them.

If you decide this is the breed for you, acquiring a second IG is a delightful option (once you've been properly trained by the first, that is!). IG's are pack orientated hounds. This means that they will follow pack order. If one IG is injured or sick, it is not unknown for a "pack" to hurt or possibly kill the injured/sick IG.

Which makes a better pet...a male or a female? Female Italian Greyhounds are a little "stand-offish". They are more independent and can even be a bit uppity at times. If you have more than one IG in your house, the female will ALWAYS be the leader of the house. Males are much more apt to cuddle and make ideal lap warmers. Males also seem to show their affection by keeping close.

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Most owners find that male IG's are easier and faster to housetrain than females. If housetrained correctly and neutered, a male IG will not lift his leg in your house.

HEALTH AND GROOMING

When it comes to health, the Italian Greyhound is generally a robust and healthy breed. However, like all dogs, they are prone to certain health issues, including dental problems and musculoskeletal issues.

They are generally a healthy breed and can live 13 to 15 years if properly cared for. That doesn't mean they aren't at risk for some more common health conditions, but the biggest risk to an Italian greyhound is their small size and fine bones. Many Italian greyhounds think they are the biggest of the sighthounds rather than the smallest so they tend to go after anything and everything. This can lead to behaviors like jumping out of people's arms which can often lead to one of the biggest health problems Italian Greyhounds face: broken bones. Luckily, this is a fairly preventable health risk.

Some of the common conditions seen in this breed include dental problems, patellar luxation, progressive retinal atrophy, and allergies.

In terms of grooming, the Italian Greyhound's short coat is easy to maintain. Weekly brushing will help keep their coat shiny and free from loose hair. They are also known to be somewhat prone to dental issues, so regular teeth brushing is important to maintain good oral health. Additionally, their nails should be trimmed regularly, and ears should be checked and cleaned to prevent any infections.

Paying attention to health and grooming will help ensure that your Italian Greyhound remains healthy and happy for years to come.

SUITABILITY

Italian Greyhounds are generally good dogs. They are affectionate, loyal, and gentle, making them great companions for individuals and families. They are also known for their intelligence and athleticism. Italian Greyhounds may have a high prey drive and are sensitive to cold, so they require some special care and attention. Overall, they make wonderful pets for the right owner who can provide them with the love, exercise, and attention they need.

Living with an Italian Greyhound can be a delightful experience for families. Their affectionate and gentle nature makes them well-suited for households with children, particularly older kids who understand the importance of being gentle with smaller dogs. They enjoy being part of a pack and bond closely with their family members.

Their small size makes them well-suited for apartment living, but they also appreciate outdoor activities. Families who enjoy walks, jogs, or outdoor adventures will find a willing and energetic companion in the Italian Greyhound. It is important to note that their thin coat and low body fat make them sensitive to extreme temperatures, so care should be taken in very cold or hot climates. Overall, Italian Greyhounds bring a blend of affection, energy, and adaptability that can make them a wonderful addition to a loving family environment.

Embracing the Italian Greyhound offers an opportunity to enrich your life with the boundless warmth and delights that this breed has to offer, ensuring a harmonious and joyous companionship for many years to come.