

Pocket Rocket Racing Primer

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I often receive requests for information about racing with Italian greyhounds. Personally, I think sprint racing is the ideal sport for IG's and IG owners. There are two main questions newcomers have about racing IG's: 1. Will they do it? and 2. Is it safe? For the novice owner and dog, sprint racing appears to be the best bet for getting a positive response to both questions.

In reality, IG's are much sturdier than they appear, and don't get injured even in oval racing or lure coursing. But to a "newbie" the idea that sprint racing is held on straight, level ground and does not involve any turns is generally comforting.

As for whether or not a dog will chase a lure, like any breed, some IG's are instant fanatics, some take a while to catch on, and some never seem to get the idea. However, sprint racing does seem to be the venue that offers the highest chance for success. In sprint racing, dogs get to chase a very attractive, furry, squeaky bunny, and they can do that while running towards someone they know. Those two factors combined definitely help the success rate in IG's. While many IG's lure course successfully, there are a number that will run a certain distance and then lose interest. These dogs are ideally suited for sprint racing. In addition, sprint racing may increase the enthusiasm of these dogs and some may eventually go on to become successful lure coursers.

Conditioning for IG's is no different than for any other breed, except that IG's can often be successfully exercised in a smaller space than bigger hounds. Walking, running, biking and swimming are all good choices if available. Many IG owners can also get in a good workout just throwing a toy for the dog to fetch if the IG is so inclined.

Equipment is the other issue for this size dog. Blankets are really not a problem, as most people that sew blankets can easily acquire an IG sized pattern if they don't already have one. One source of blankets is www.gocoursing.com. If necessary, blankets can be borrowed initially, but it really slows things down and there is no guarantee someone else's blankets will fit, so ultimately, everyone will want their own.

Muzzles for IG's are a little harder. Most people are having the best luck with the brown plastic muzzles that are available in a wide range of sizes from many pet supply catalogs.



If the muzzle has a nylon strap, that is better, as they are continuously adjustable. If it has a leather strap and buckle, it may require additional holes be punched in the leather to get a proper fit.

The “nose end” of these muzzles generally has only one small opening. If that is the case, multiple holes need to be drilled to insure adequate ventilation. Holes can be drilled with a normal household drill, drilling from inside to out, to make sure the rough side of the hole is on the outside.

These muzzles come with a small size number stamped on the side. A “3” will fit the majority of IG’s. Some small bitches will wear a “2” and a few large males wear a “4.” One source for these muzzles is UPCO, www.upco.com. The part numbers are VM2, VM3, and VM4 respectively. Other suppliers also sell them, but the part numbers will vary.

Greyhound racing style muzzles are now also available in IG size from Halemar
<http://www.halemar.com>

Good luck and good racing!