

DBRG 
Dog Breeding Reform Group



Annual Report 2017

Membership

Trustees Dr Fiona Cooke, David Grimsell, Dr Dan O'Neill, Charlotte Mackaness, Lesley Field, Julia Charlton, Stephen Charlton, Katharine Williams, Carol Fowler (Chairman)

Members Julia Carr, Tania Ledger, Dr Rowena Packer, Dr Clare Rusbridge, Dr Pete Wedderburn

Advisors Prof Sheila Crispin, Marisa Heath (APGAW, CFSG, Defra Panel), Vicki Betton (PDSA), Gudrun Ravetz (BVA)

We were sad to lose Chris Laurence as a trustee but at the same time delighted that Chris has been appointed as Chairman of the Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG)

Meetings were held on 2 March, 22 June, 14 September, 30 November 2017

Support from other organisations

We have been supported by Cavalier Matters, PDSA, Dogs Trust, BVA, Cockapoo Club of GB

Charity Commission Registration as a Registered Charitable Trust

We are currently in the process of becoming a registered Charitable Trust. The agreed Objects of DBRG as a charity are:

To promote humane behaviour towards animals by providing and supporting initiatives to improve dog welfare related to:

- a) genetic and breed-related health, breeding, rearing and selling practices
- b) to inform the public about irresponsible dog breeding in order to make them aware of the potential impact on their dogs' health and welfare

We are being advised and supported in this endeavour by Helen Black, South Gloucestershire Community Voluntary Services.

Website

The DBRG website has been edited to incorporate the requirements of the Charity Commission

Responses to official consultations

- DBRG Response to Ireland Public Consultation on the Review of Dog Breeding Establishments Guidelines
- DBRG Response to Defra Review of Animal Establishments Licensing in England: Next Steps (February 2017)
- DBRG's Comment on the Government Response to the Efra Committee's Third Report: Animal Welfare in England: domestic pets (February 2017)

- DBRG Response to Draft Regulations 2017 (The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) Regulations 2018)

Position Papers completed in 2017

- Licensing and Registration of Dog Breeders and Sale of Puppies
- Health Testing
- Microchipping and Traceability
- Health and Welfare of Brachycephalic Dogs
- An Independent Committee to Provide Expert Advice on Companion Animal Welfare
- Third Party Sale of Puppies

Social Media

DBRG is now active on social media thanks to Charlotte Mackaness who set up an active Facebook page and Twitter account. It was largely through these means that the DBRG Symposium was promoted.

International Partnership for Dogs (IPFD) Dog Health Workshop, Paris, April 21-23 2017

Carol Fowler and Charlotte Mackaness attended the 3rd Dog Health Workshop in Paris and were able to network with other delegates as well as proudly represent a group dedicated to giving a voice to dogs themselves and dog owners. We felt that an organisation dedicated to an international effort to improve dog health is an excellent endeavour on the part of its founder, Brenda Bonnett. Many (mainly European) Kennel Clubs were represented as well as an encouraging number of welfare organisations and scientists. DBRG members, Dan O'Neill and Rowena Packer attended, representing Vet Compass and the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) respectively. DBRG advisor, Gudrun Ravetz (President, BVA) also attended and we were delighted to get to know Ian Seath, Chairman, Dachshund Breed Health Council. We hope to continue our association with the IPFD and attend the next Workshop in London in 2019.

External meetings

Meeting at Surrey University Vet School to plan the DBRG Symposium, 30 March 2017, Charlotte Mackaness, Carol Fowler, Clare Rusbridge, Julia Gerhold (Surrey University Vet School Events Organiser)

Conference at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) Camden, *The Human /Animal Bond and Companion Animals*, 21, June 2017 attended by Carol Fowler, Dan O'Neill, Rowena Packer, Chris Laurence

Constituency meeting with Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, MP, Cirencester, 1 July 2017, to request a meeting with Lord Gardiner and update on DBRG work

Meeting at the BVA on the RSPCA/AWF Puppy Contract proposed re-launch, 10 July attended by Carol Fowler, Stephen Charlton, Julia Charlton, Chris Laurence

Meeting with Defra Minister, Lord Gardiner and Defra official Phil Alder, 7 September, Carol Fowler accompanied by MP, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown

Meeting with Bill Lambert and other Kennel Club staff at the Kennel Club, regarding CKCS Health Issues. Attended by Tania Ledger, Charlotte Mackaness, Carol Fowler

DBRG Symposium October 22 2017

Our first Symposium, in collaboration with the University of Surrey Vet School, on '*Tackling Inherited and Conformational Problems in Dogs*' took place in October.

The main speakers were Dr Clare Rusbridge and Prof Sheila Crispin, with the Question and Answer session chaired by Dr Pete Wedderburn. A short additional presentation was given by Dr David Sargan, University of Cambridge, on his research into Brachycephaly in Dogs. Carol introduced the work of DBRG.



Carol, Clare, Sheila, Pete

Clare and Sheila's talks were inspiring, not just in their scientific content but in the way both speakers were able to engage with the audience. The Symposium was a great success with just under 150 delegates. Feedback was very positive and showed the huge concern that there is among vets, vet students, welfare organisations, dog breeders and dog owners about the welfare issues associated with the breeding of dogs. Another Symposium is planned for 2019.

We have learned lessons about ticket prices, catering costs and sponsorship.

National Pet Show, NEC, Birmingham 4-5 November 2017



We shared a stand with the Cockapoo club of GB at the National Pet Show as agreed with the NPS organisers. Carol Fowler and Chris Laurence represented DBRG on Saturday, Chris also gave a presentation on *'How to make sure you buy a healthy puppy.'* Carol was joined by Fiona Cooke on Sunday who had a particular talent for engaging with the public! Dozens of DBRG leaflets and flyers for the Dog Breed Health website were handed out and distributed to other exhibitors. Some DBRG note pads, key rings, cards and pens were available for sale but lack of space and inexperience resulted in very poor sales!

It became clear that our presence at public events in the future would need to be independent of any other organisation as it was confusing to the public when two separate organisations shared the same space. Having our own stand at public events in the future currently seems unlikely due to the costs involved and insufficient numbers of volunteers willing to give their time.

We are grateful to the Cockapoo Club of GB for allowing us to share their stand on this occasion.

DBRG Online Shop

Tania Ledger has offered to lend us her expertise in setting up an on-line shop which will serve the dual purpose of raising funds and getting our advice out to the public. Work on this will begin in January 2018.

National Dog Breeding Inspection Scheme, 'Breedright'



A national dog breeding inspection scheme, Breedright, applying to all types of dog breeding, is being developed. Its basis is the Standard for Dog Breeding. Applicant breeders will need to meet stringent standards and would gain a marketing benefit from membership. The Breedright working group consists currently of Chris Laurence, Fiona Cooke, David Grimsell, Katharine Williams. Breedright will need to be set up as a separate Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) but the *Standard for Dog Breeding* remains the property of DBRG. The draft constitution specifies that three trustees should also be DBRG trustees (Katharine Williams and Fiona Cooke have been agreed).

Chris Laurence is appointed as an external founding trustee.



In the first instance, the Scheme will be designed to meet International Standards Organisation (ISO) criteria. UKAS accreditation will be considered in light of developments in licensing legislation and risk-based assessment by local authorities.

An Outline Inspector Training Syllabus has been produced and a corresponding Training Manual is underway. Launch of the Scheme will be announced at a later date.

Political and Legal Developments

During 2017 there have been important developments in terms of Government consideration of matters relating to dog welfare and dog breeding. These included the undertaking by the UK Government of a *Review of Animal Activities Licensing*. The *Review* continues and it is anticipated that new regulations on dog breeding will include the incorporation of model licensing conditions; the development of local authority inspector training; and the introduction of a risk-based approach to local authority licensing and inspections. New regulations are expected to come into force in October 2018.

Also in 2017 the Efra Select Committee considered relevant issues as part of its *Inquiry into Animal Welfare in England: Domestic Pets*. DBRG was pleased to see that recommendations of the Committee included the registration of all dog breeders; revision of licensing standards; the requirement for the display of registration numbers in advertisements; and stronger sentences for animal welfare offences. We were particularly pleased to see the Committee's recommendations that legislation should be enacted to protect the genetic variability and welfare of offspring. DBRG also welcomed the recommendation for a ban on the third party sale of puppies. However we are disappointed that the banning of third party sale of puppies is not on the Government's agenda.

We have been pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to these consultations and anticipate the outcome of the licensing review in the New Year.

DBRG Issues

Funding: The over-riding issue we face is funding. So far no-one has been found who is willing to take on the role of fund raiser, although Tania Ledger will help to get us going with an online shop which will operate from the DBRG website. Tania has already produced and donated note pads, key rings, pens and Christmas cards to get us going. Cavalier Matters also funds the technical support for our website. Our technician, Steve Tolmie, provides an excellent service which enables any changes or additions to the website to be done quickly and professionally.

The funding issue is critical to the continuation of our work. It is hoped that becoming a registered charitable trust will make it easier to apply for funding from other organisations willing to donate to smaller animal welfare charities.

The volunteer nature of DBRG membership: Another issue is the fact that members are all volunteers most of whom have other jobs and responsibilities and are unable to devote sufficient time to DBRG. Inevitably this means that a few people end up doing the bulk of the work and there is a risk of 'burn-out.' There is the potential also for a conflict of interest when members also represent other organisations. Some solutions need to be found, including a fairer distribution of work load.

DBRG presence at national events: Having a presence at events around the country to give information and advice to members of the public would be very helpful in achieving our charitable aims. However, it is not realistic to do this at present due to the logistics, costs and personnel needed to attend the events. We need to be on a sounder financial basis in order to do this in the future and be able to call upon a team of people willing to take on this role.

Message to members from Chairman

It has been an extraordinarily productive year for DBRG, one in which we have played our part in highlighting the health and welfare issues associated with dog breeding and working towards some practical solutions. I think we have gained respect from other, more influential stakeholders and have a very real contribution to make. We have excellent advice and information on the DBRG website and have made our position clear on a number of key issues. The Symposium was a triumph. To those who have worked so hard this year to make things happen, my very grateful thanks.

Carol Fowler
December 2017