

## Notes of DBRG Meeting December 2021

### Present:

Vicki Betton (VB), Fiona Cooke (FC), Michelle Farrow (MF), Lesley Field (LF), Carol Fowler (CF), Andrew Gillon (AG), Emma Milne (EM), Dan O'Neill (DO), Rowena Packer (RP), Clare Rusbridge (CR), Alison Skipper (AS), Annie Wilson (AW), Tania Ledger (TL)

**Chair:** Clare Rusbridge

Welcome all

Agreement on accuracy of previous minutes

Any actions remaining for discussion/update are included in the Agenda for this meeting.

### Agenda Item 3

CF met with local authority representative Sharon Edwards (SE). SE will be leading the City of London Inspectors Group. CF shared the breed posters with Sharon. It was discussed that these could be very useful, although there is currently too much information on them for LA inspectors in terms of practical application.

The new Chair of CAWGW is Bethan Sayed, former Assembly Member, Plaid Cymru: CF had a meeting with the new Secretary, and a meeting with the Chair will take place shortly.

APGAW meeting: 'Increasing Circle' discussion. Highlighted the increasing knowledge and concern about Animal Welfare in the UK and elsewhere. Legal recognition in the UK of Animal Sentience is part of this 'increasing circle.'

### Item 4

DBRG policy definitions. It was identified that we need to ensure common agreement on descriptors and language to ensure that there is shared language in discussions and shared information. Examples included the links between 'normal' behaviour and the implications of physical shape in this; Definition of Responsible Breeder.

It was decided to divide into groups of 3-4 to build some definitions – then share with the group for further discussion. **Action** for smaller groups below to return to full group with definitions (short paragraph only) for full discussion:

Health – CF, CR, AW, TL

Natural behaviour – AG, FC, MF

Language – CF, VB, DO

Responsible/good breeder – RP, EM, CR

Definition we already have: 'healthy dog' – short and long versions.

It was agreed that it is important to bear in mind the audience and purpose of definitions – to support clarity in discussions and policies and as part of DBRG's elevator pitch

### **Item 5**

The Areas of Focus document requires review and update. CF will update and circulate for comment.

**Action:** Group will feedback on updated document.

### **Item 6**

Discussion regarding the breed posters and progress.

RP highlighted that 19% of owners in recent study were not interested to know whether their puppy's parents had any known health conditions.

AG – is a member of the SSPCA working group on human behaviour change in relation to puppy buying. He will feed in updates.

CF – posters are built in Canva. Information is drawn from breed clubs, UFAW, IPFD DogWellNet and other relevant sites.

Discussion around providing a simplified version of the full documents, to draw out the key information for purchasers. Ideally, there would be full liaison with breed clubs to promote the posters. **Action:** AS will approach breed club groups to share the posters.

AS and CF will discuss the list of completed breed posters to check the information.

**Action All:** to review the posters – preference is for a few to be sent at a time to individuals to review rather than all at once. This makes it an easier task.

Agreed that it is important to avoid 'watering down' the posters, but it is also critical to ensure the information is noticed and understood. Idea to highlight key items in bold – or traffic light listing e.g. 'these are really important' and 'these sometimes occur in this breed'. This would ensure that the posters address the main issues in the breed.

Noted it is important to empower potential owners to ask questions, to provide avenues to information and encourage people to engage with the information.

**Action:** Alongside contacting the groups and individuals with expertise, it was suggested that DBRG social media should promote the posters, inviting others to engage in the process. Communications software will need to be developed for this.

The same comms can go to breed health coordinators – requesting that if they would like to be involved, to please get in touch. We will need to set consultation period to ensure that documents are completed.

**Action:** AS will request feedback on breed health co-ordinator facebook and will manage responses.

The focus of the posters is as information for puppy buyers; therefore, this thread will need to run through all documents.

### **Item 7**

Different ‘types of breeder’ information was discussed. It may be valuable to include on the information that the list does not provide specific rankings, and that the standards can be varied both between and within groups.

Discussion around ‘backyard breeder’ phrasing used. **Action:** agreed to provide more detailed information explaining that the term ‘backyard breeder’ can sometimes be called family breeder, hobby breeder, pin money breeder and other

### **Item 8**

Local Authority training module. The group is in place and VB will lead when returns to work fully. **Action:** meeting will be arranged for the end of March. Sharon Edwards will join group.

### **Item 9**

The new DBRG Symposium date is Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November at the University of Surrey.

We still need a dermatology expert who can discuss breed-related skin disorders. Talk title to be: ‘Breed and conformation related skin disease: what the dermatologists wish owners knew’. **Action:** CR will approach potential speaker. (£150 speaker rate and reasonable expenses).

It was agreed that an article relating to the Symposium in relevant Journals, eg Vet Times, would be effective and impactful.

### **Item 10**

Important to change the narrative on dog purchasing – discussion based on recent highlighted conversations in press and at conference events.

RW and AS – conversation has focused around whether there is a place for well-controlled commercial large scale breeding practices. There is some significant research taking place regarding this at the moment. This approach to dog breeding is now a large part of the

sector. There needs to be discussion regarding inherited disease and impact of rearing in these environments as well. Appropriate and effective regulation would be necessary.

Some of those who are breeding for money will do so regardless of the messaging. Messaging needs to take into account that caring and conscientious breeders may stop breeding if they think it is irresponsible to breed at all. Does this then open the route for fewer 'responsible' and more 'irresponsible' breeders?

It's important to consider the narrative around this, but also recognise the demand for dogs.

Agreed that the information we now have on the website fits the DBRG approach – as it is about finding the right, 'responsible' breeder rather than engaging in a debate about the rights/wrongs of breeding in itself.

**Action:** on information regarding puppy purchasing on DBRG website, will add that it is important to visit a breeder on a number of occasions over a longer time period to see the puppy regularly with mum and development and interactions generally. CF will check website and messaging – will add to visit dogs at least 3 times and check environment and housing/care.

Discussion around active encouragement of responsible breeders – CF is speaking to Rebecca Walters (Pupstarts Breeders) next week, with a view to inviting her to the next DBRG meeting.

## **Item 11**

Discussion about the changes to the breed standard for the French Bulldog. It was highlighted that not all the information appears to have been updated/be freely available to those involved in breeding/judging.

It was also noted that many images in relation to the breed have not been updated by relevant parties to reflect the new requirements – therefore the breed standard changes are not being promoted through the images used. It was also noted that recent judging has not matched the updated breed standard requirements.

BWG has worked on this to establish a clear process for driving change and progress collaborative working with external groups and KC processes.

**Action:** DBRG will respond to the changes with a statement like: 'DBRG welcome the changes to the breed standard for the French Bulldog, such as more open nostrils. However DBRG would like to see these changes reflected in the judging at shows and to see clear implementation of the changes.'

**Action:** Retweet regarding this with comment like 'it is good to see the continuing improvement to this troubled breed.'

**Action:** Social media response that acknowledges the hard work put in to achieving these changes and recognise the on-going process. DBRG hope that the breed standard changes are translated into a visible change in the dogs, with improved welfare.

CR will help with Twitter. CF will write newsletter section.

**Action:** BWG strategy input request: DBRG will respond – CF will draft response and circulate for feedback from the group (deadline is 21<sup>st</sup> December).

## **Item 12**

Kennel Club – email from Bill Lambert (BL) explains that the reviews are ongoing and it would be better to discuss updates from recent meetings in March. KC will forward copies of reviews of documents and policies, ABS rules etc, planned to be completed by March.

**Action:** VB will follow up re GDPR query around sires and contact details.

**Action:** item for next DBRG meeting Agenda – to review feedback from BL.

## **AOB**

LF shared that she will be leaving DBRG. She will continue to feed in from Breed Health Coordinators where helpful to DBRG and will continue her support of the work of DBRG. The Group thanked LF for her contributions and hard work for dog welfare.

## **Dates of next DBRG meetings**

17<sup>th</sup> March – AG chair

23<sup>rd</sup> June – DO chair

8<sup>th</sup> Sept – FC chair

8<sup>th</sup> Dec – CR chair