



Meeting 23 June 2022 (Via Zoom) (2pm – 5pm)

Members present: Carol Fowler (CF), Dan O’Neill (DON), Emma Milne (EM), Katharine Williams (KW), Tania Ledger (TL), Annie Wilson (AW), Alison Skipper (AS), Charlie Butcher (CB) (Student Ambassador)

Meeting chaired by Dan O’Neil

Apologies: Fiona Cooke (FC), Vicki Betton (VB), Andrew Gillon (AG), Rowena Packer (RP), Clare Rusbridge (CR), Michelle Farrow (MF), Sean McCormack (SM)

1. Matters arising

Definitions of Normal Behaviour needs to be completed. It was agreed that the infographic about ‘being a dog’ should be put on the website with the definition.

ACTION FC, RP, AG

2. Breed Poster update

It is intended to publish Breed Posters for the top 63 breeds on the website, and each one is being checked for health information accuracy by AS. 26 of the 63 have been checked and all agreed should be published on the website. It was agreed to put one breed a week on social media.

The best way of presenting the posters for use by Local Authority inspectors, and the wider general public was discussed, and it was agreed that a flip-book or an App would be the ideal way forward. The cost to be investigated.

ACTION ?

3. Symposium

The topic for the 2024 symposium was discussed, and agreed that ‘outcrossing’ would be an interesting topic. To appeal to a wider audience, it was agreed that the content should not be too technical, and perhaps include the ethics involved in the breeding of pedigree dogs, and outcrossing to achieve good outcomes. The use of live streaming was discussed for

2024 and agreed that it would be a preferable option. However, it is not possible for the event planned in November due to time constraints.

Going on to discuss the symposium planned for November this year, 20 tickets have been sold to date, which does not compare well with previous years. However, it was agreed that because of the Covid restrictions people may still be reluctant to buy tickets many months from the event. It was agreed to review ticket sales by the end of September.

The importance of promoting the event was emphasised to all. **ACTION All Members**

4. Bernese Mountain Dog Outcross Project

AW reported on a meeting that she has had with Kathy Berge who is coordinating a project in the United States. The second meeting with Kathy was attended also by CF and AS. AW explained that various breeds have been selected to breed out to and then bring back to the Bernese Mountain Dog. Each parent is selected for health and temperament, and hip and elbow scores are crucial. Every puppy will be tracked its entire life. Overall health will be monitored and longevity tracked. A Bernese Mountain Dog Vitality Project database has been started and every dog and pup entered into it. It is too early to report on the project's success but it is an exciting project which DBRG will be monitoring.

5. Collaboration with RSPCA

Sam Gaines from RSPCA would like to join DBRG and all were in favour of this. DBRG's collaboration with the RSPCA would be beneficial to dog health and welfare and Sam's perspective and expertise would be an asset to DBRG.

6. Collaboration with Kennel Club

It was agreed that another meeting with the Kennel Club would be advantageous in order to discuss the Puppy Contracts (AWF and ABS) Puppy Info Pack and the Codes of Practice for Dog Breeding (ABS and CFSG) versions. However, the 15th July date which has been mooted may not be convenient for all. It was agreed that DBRG trustees and members who wished to attend may do so.

A hybrid meeting with some members attending and some via zoom/teams would be the best option. CF to go back to KC and suggest meeting in September

ACTION CF

7. Crufts Winners and Healthy Champions

DBRG recommends that Show Champion dogs should be as healthy as possible. They should be free from the most serious inherited health issues in their breed. The fact that it is not a KC requirement that dogs should be health tested before they either enter the show ring or be used as breeding dogs was discussed at length. The consensus was that the vet checks at

major dog shows, such as Crufts, do not go far enough. Show winning dogs may have diseases which are not visible but which can be passed on to offspring. All agreed that this is an issue which needs to be discussed with the KC, and added to the agenda for the next meeting with them.

8. Fertility Clinic Nature Watch / CFSG Workshop

The Nature Watch presentation highlighted once again the issue of the growing number of fertility clinics in the UK and the realities of this method of maximising the production of puppies. Such establishments may be infringing the Animal Welfare Act and Regulations for Dog Breeding. A presentation from the SSPCA highlighted the very poor treatment of breeding dogs and was distressing to watch. The question of licensing was raised but many of these establishments are unlicensed and undercover. Organised crime is sometimes involved due to the huge profits that can be made and the popularity of certain dog breeds. The welfare implications of these practices are compounded with certain popular breeds, such as Bulldogs, which often require caesarean sections to give birth. DBRG will support any initiatives taken to tackle this serious issue.

9. Sector Issues

CFSG requested that DBRG provide some notes relating to the Defra Post Implementation Review (PIR) of the Licensing Regulations. This was done by CF and forwarded to the CFSG Secretary in May 2022

Brachycephalic Working Group

The group have produced a paper, with an infographic, Innate health in dogs. The document was presented to DBRG and was very well received. It is available on the BWG website.

APGAW

CF reported that APGAW is planning to return to the issue of Dog Inherited Health in the near future and the programme would be led by Lord Trees. It was agreed that a better definition of 'genetic health' is required.

10. LA Inspectors Training Module

It was again noted that LA Inspectors are poorly trained in dog health (if at all) when issuing licences to breeding establishments. Without proper training and policing the Regulations are not working as well as they should.

It was discussed that a specialist panel of vets, who Local Authority inspectors could refer to, would be helpful in providing breed-specific knowledge. However, cost and lack of resources would make this really difficult to achieve.

DBRG remains keen to help with the training of the inspectors and it was agreed that the Breed Posters are a start. A flip book system, or mobile phone app would be ideal.

Preferably the inspectors should be trained, using a single curriculum with all local authorities, country wide using the same criteria and approach. The use of a traffic light system (red, amber, green) could be a way of assisting in identifying priority breeds with the most serious health issues. DBRG may be able to develop this.

A written update from the LA Inspectors Training Module Working Group was not available but work is ongoing and another meeting of the working group is anticipated soon.

ACTION VB and members of the working group

11. Infographic

AW has been working on an infographic on inbreeding and genetic diversity. It was agreed that once the draft is completed it will be emailed to the group for any additions or comments. The final version will be published on the website.

ACTION AW

12. Student Ambassador Activities

MF sent apologies as she was unable to attend, but CB attended and confirmed that the ambassadors are spreading the DBRG message between vet schools, and also doing fundraising activities. CF asked that the Symposium is also promoted and CB agreed to remind all ambassadors

ACTION Michelle Farrow ongoing

13. Succession Update

From December 2022 CF will be retiring from her role as DBRG Leader. Finding a successor to work on a voluntary basis will be challenging due to the volume of work involved in combining both the leadership and secretarial role. It was felt that the structure of DBRG will have to change with other trustees and members taking on new roles. CF has completed a job description which she will circulate, and the intention will be to advertise for a new leader via the DBRG website and social media.

The item will be on the agenda for the next meeting and an additional one-hour meeting will be scheduled specifically for this purpose

ACTION AG (to send round a Doodle poll for the extra meeting)

Date of Next Meeting Thurs 8 September 2022