



Notes of Meeting 9 June 2016

British Veterinary Association (BVA), 7 Mansfield Street, London W1G 9NQ

Present:

Dan O'Neill (DON), Sheila Crispin (SC), Chris Laurence (CL), Stephen Charlton (SC), Julia Charlton (JC), Tania Ledger (TL), Carol Fowler (CF), Charlotte Mackness (CM), Natalie Plowman (NP), Rowena Packer (RP), Marisa Heath (MH), David Grimsell (DG), Gudrun Ravetz (GR)

Apologies:

Clare Rusbridge, Julia Carr, Fiona Cooke, Lesley Field, Vicki Betton

Guests:

Mark Berry (National Companion Animal Focus Group) (NCAFG)
Mick Watson (Lead Inspector, Cockapoo Club of GB, Approved Breeders)

1. Matters arising

- Welcome to new member, Rowena Packer, from the Royal Veterinary College. Also to guests, Mark Berry and Mick Watson.
- DBRG Objectives: changes in wording from 'An agreed Puppy Contract and An agreed Standard for Breeding' to 'Widespread use of the Puppy Contract and PIP' and 'Widespread use of the Standard for Breeding Dogs.'
- Copies of the BVA / KC Canine Health Schemes were made available for all members
- DBRG website: www.dogbreedingreformgroup.uk all pages of the website have now been published. Technical support will be provided by Steve Tolmie, courtesy of Cavalier Matters charity.
- The Kennel Club's Breed Health Survey results for individual breeds are now available on line: www.thekennelclub.org.uk/vets-researchers/pedigree-breed-health-survey-2014
CF will cross check with the breed related health issues on the DogBreedHealth website: www.dogbreedhealth.com
- The RVC VetCompass online Infographics – Disease prevalence data for UK dogs is also now published. This is ongoing work. <http://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass/learn-zone/infographics/canine>

2. DBRG Membership

GR raised the issue of DBRG members who were also representatives of their own organisations. This can cause problems, particularly with press statements and press releases and getting everyone's agreement on the wording. On a number of occasions this has caused delay or prevented us from going ahead. One solution is that those representing other organisations become Advisors or Associate members. This should enable us to make decisions more quickly.

CF noted how difficult it is to get organisations to work together on a particular welfare issue because each has their own agenda and priorities.

3. Consultation and decision making

Problems in decision making have also occurred due to the large membership of the Group. We agreed that smaller working groups should be formed, such as the Standard For Breeding Dogs Group, and Communications Group so that we become more efficient at producing outcomes. The whole group of DBRG members should agree by majority about final decisions. CF must be copied in to all smaller group correspondence and documents to aid administration and record keeping.

4. Scientific evidence, 'political correctness', communication with the public, daring to be different.

It was felt that we had a good balance of membership, representing the essential elements of dog breeding, dog welfare, science and political campaigning. The need for scientific evidence to support our cause is paramount. Written output should be properly referenced with the exception of brief messages via social media and the press. There are inevitably going to be healthy tensions between the need to give out a strong and clear message and being careful to use the language of diplomacy. We must be mindful of this at all times but not afraid to say it like it is when the need arises. Crucially it is important that members of the public feel we are speaking to them and empowering them when making one of the most important decisions they will ever make: buying a puppy.

5. The Standard for Breeding Dogs (SBD) and National Dog Breeding Inspection Scheme (NDBIS) (CL, DG, JC, joined by Mick Watson, Cockapoo Club of GB Approved Breeder Inspector)

The working group, convened by JC, outlined the progress made so far, following a meeting on 9 May.

DG began by outlining the NDBIS Scheme Framework Overview, ie, purpose, key elements, conditions of breeding and rearing, meeting the emotional needs of dogs and puppies, outcome assessment, prevention of inherited disease, breeder knowledge, NDBIS Code of Ethics. The Scheme will be a generic one across all breeds and crossbreeds with the aim of breeding dogs which will make excellent companion and family pets. The Scheme will be developmental and will include a lifelong commitment by a breeder to the dogs they breed. This document is still in draft form and will be circulated to the wider group when agreed by the working group.

FC (unfortunately unable to attend the meeting) has produced a written NDBIS Inspector Structure. The Scheme will provide a well-structured, transparent and expert inspection team in order to ensure that the requisite standards are upheld. Each Inspector will need to be specifically trained in keeping with the requirements of this role. The document includes the training of inspectors, inspector knowledge, and the assessment process. It is still in draft form.

CL informed the group that the Standard for Breeding Dogs would be based on the original Dog Advisory Council's Standard with some adjustments which reflect more recent scientific understanding and move towards a more outcome based approach. This document is also currently in draft form.

JC distributed a diagrammatic overview of the NDBIS. This included a scheme for online applications from breeders (stage one) costing in the region of £30-£50. If stage one criteria are met, a breeder may then move to stage two which will require an inspector visit. Costs will range from £150 for a single litter

breeder to £450 for 4-10 litters and £550 more than 10 litters. Note that these costings are initial estimates and will need to be discussed further. The Scheme would use a five-star rating system. It is understood that the Scheme would be small scale to begin with but would grow and evolve over time.

JC also presented an outline proposal from the website design company, TJS, for a fully interactive website for online applications, inspector input, breeder admin, and breeder login for breeders to update contact details, health test results, microchip information, etc. However the cost is high (£12,000 - £14,000) and other website companies should also be approached.

How would the NDBIS work in practice? It would have to apply the standards and criteria laid down by the DBRG's Standard for Breeding Dogs. The Inspection Scheme could be set up as a company limited by guarantee with any profits donated to the DBRG charity. Inspectors would be salaried and professional.

It is not intended that the NDBIS would replace local authority registration or inspections. Licensed breeders would need to include their local authority licence number (and local authority registration number, if applicable). However, the NDBIS could fit in to a local authorities risk based scheme and would work closely with them. It would be important to have a good working relationship with local council licensing inspectors. Whether or not the NDBIS seeks UKAS accreditation will be decided at a later date depending on the outcome of the Defra Review of Licensing. It needs to be understood by everyone that UKAS accreditation simply means that the processes involved in a scheme reflect the standards laid down by the body operating to those standards. UKAS accreditation says nothing about the standards themselves. (See the Appendix to these Notes on the possible scenarios for licensing written by DG).

Documents produced by the NDBIS working group will be circulated to all DBRG members for their approval.

We agreed it would be very good to have the endorsement of other welfare organisations such as the RSPCA for the DBRG Breeding Standard. When finalised, the Standard could be forwarded to other organisations for their consideration.

Mick Watson spoke about his background as an RAF dog handler, and Inspector for the Cockapoo Club of GB, Approved Breeders Scheme. It is proposed that Mick could be the lead inspector for the new scheme. Mick outlined his approach in his role of Inspector for the CCGB Approved Breeders. Essentially it is an informal and sympathetic approach to gain the confidence of the breeder with notice of inspections between 24 to 48 hours. Strategic questions are asked to assess a breeder's knowledge and help and advice given if a breeder does not meet the criteria initially. JC said that such a scheme has tremendous value for the public and is one that puppy buyers can have confidence in. Currently CCGB approved breeders cannot meet the demand from the puppy buying public.

6. National Companion Animal Focus Group (NCAFG) (Mark Berry)

Mark outlined the background and role of the NCAFG and issues raised by the Defra Licensing consultation. His document, including some of the NCAFG responses to the consultation, was circulated before the meeting. It proposed that anyone breeding/selling puppies would need to be registered by their local authority and the registration number used on all forms of advertising. Anyone who breeds more than one (possibly two) litters would then need to extend their registration to a formal licence application, subject to inspection and payment of an appropriate fee. NCAFG believes that until you have an audit trail of anyone who wants to breed and sell dogs through registration, welfare standards will not

be improved overall. Local authority information about dog breeders should be kept on one central database. Accountability and subsequent enforcement can become complicated when there are several databases or points of registration as highlighted with the horse passports and dog microchipping.

Currently there is no consistency of enforcement within local authorities for animal licensing establishments because central government does not take a lead role and offer guidance, whereas this exists via DEFRA and APHA in the case of farm animal welfare. Similarly there is no independent advisory agency such as exists in the form of the Food Standards Authority (FSA) who audit and ultimately hold a local authority to account if their food hygiene inspections are not up to scratch.

NCAFG is strongly against the idea of exemption from local authority licensing for UKAS accredited breeders' schemes on several grounds (see NCAFG Response to the Defra consultation). Chief among these are a lack of transparency and accountability, the limitations of such schemes for ensuring dog welfare, inconsistent standards and the inevitable confusion arising from the operation of two systems and deciding who ultimately picks up any enforcement issues. Also, it has been demonstrated that accredited schemes in farm animal welfare, such as Red Tractor and Freedom Foods, is no guarantee of good welfare.

The NCAFG favours a unified risk-based system with clear lines of communication between any affiliated bodies and local authorities to access data and inspection records. A proposed example of what such a framework may look like, for local authorities to implement, is provided in Mark's document.

DBRG and the NDBIS is in complete agreement with the NCAFG risk based framework and wishes to work with local authorities as part of this framework.

It was agreed that DBRG should push on with finalising the Standard for Breeding Dogs and fleshing out the NDBIS. The working group will meet again during July/August and more details of the Scheme will be presented to the group at the next meeting on September 8.

7. DBRG Position/Policy statements

Suggestions from members of the group have been listed on one document and circulated. DG has subsequently collapsed down the list which has been redistributed to members. It was decided we should write short statements of policy on each – about one paragraph – adding a more detailed explanation at a later stage. The BVA's Policy website page would be an appropriate model to follow. Members will be asked to volunteer to form a small working group to make a start on this but any group members with expertise in a certain area are invited to offer first drafts. Final statements and longer papers will need to be approved by the whole group. An appropriate one to begin with might be based on Julia Carr's Report, *'The Great British Puppy Survey'* on the Buying and Selling of Puppies.

8. Fund raising

CF began by saying that at this point we should all regard ourselves as fund raisers. She suggested that all members commit to a monthly donation of £2.50 (the price of a cup of coffee). An article in the Wotton-under-Edge Directory asks all dog owners to donate £1. Many thanks to Charlotte's family for their generous donation of £500. An income of a minimum of £5000 per year is necessary in order to be a registered charitable trust.

Ideas for fundraising:

- The DBRG stand will be put up at the Cockapoo Games (August 12 – 14, Newark Showground, Notts) and hopefully some funds will be raised there.
- Stephen C offered to consult the CCGB Committee regarding voluntary donations from CCGB members.
- TL offered to contribute profits from the sale of generic dog items from the Cavalier Matters online shop.
- TL also suggested that we all approach our local Waitrose store for inclusion in their charity fund raising scheme.
- NP will apply to those Animal Welfare trusts which donate to other charities and asked if anyone had contacts in any of those.
- NP also suggested approaching local dog walking groups and organising local events to raise awareness and funds.
- Setting up a Facebook fundraising page was also suggested.
- The new dog friendly café in Lincoln could also promote DBRG and receive donations.
- NP suggested a DBRG launch party to both raise awareness and raise funds. She will give this more detailed thought.
- Stephen C suggested we set up a YouTube account for raising awareness.
- JC advised that the DBRG stand would be set up at each of the dog outdoor summer events next to the CCGB stand.

Some of these wonderful ideas need to be translated into action in order to start the ball rolling.

9. AOB

RSPCA Report: Sold a pup? Exposing the breeding, trade and sale of puppies

The Report provided interesting statistics regarding the sources of puppies in the UK:

- Licensed breeders 70,000 (of those 20,000 sold by licensed 'pet shops')
- Imported from the Continent 30,000
- Imported from Ireland 40,000
- Unlicensed breeders (excluding Kennel Club registered) 400,00
- Kennel Club registered 235,000
- Rescue organisations 3,000