



Meeting 9 September 2021 (Via Zoom) (2.00 – 5.00pm)

Members present: Carol Fowler (CF), Fiona Cooke, (FC) Dan O'Neill (DON), Emma Milne (EM), Katharine Williams (KW), Vicki Betton (VB), Tania Ledger (TL), Andrew Gillon (AG), Lesley Field (LF), Rowena Packer (RP), Annie Wilson (AW), Alison Skipper (AS)

Student Ambassadors: Ben Erentraut, Emma Foster, Grace Mee,

Guest Attendees: Jacob Lloyd (Animal Protection Services), Ashild Roaldset (Norwegian SPCA), Eva Hustoft (Norwegian SPCA), Gilly Ferreira (Scottish SPCA)

Apologies: Camilla Pegram (CP)

Meeting chaired by Fiona Cooke

1. Matters arising

DBRG has been registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and the new charity registration number is: 1195705. The previous charity number to be removed, the trade marks to be transferred.

Action KW

2. Animal Protection Services (APS)

Jacob Lloyd presented the recent activities carried out by Animal Protection Services. He explained that APS undertake private prosecutions for animal cruelty, and are a member of the Private Prosecutors Association (PPA). Most recently they have been in the press for bringing prosecutions against unlicensed breeders, but from October they will not be putting resources into these prosecutions as they wish to focus their attention on welfare issues.

APS works on intelligence from the general public, and paid investigators, and their objective is to 'Prevent; Disrupt and Defeat'.

Jacob Lloyd comes from a local government background, and would be happy to work with local authority inspectors if any animal welfare issues are uncovered. It was questioned who funds APS, and Jacob explained that they are funded by donations from the general public and costs when awarded in court from defendants.

There was discussion around the role of the RSPCA in prosecutions and whether this would be taken over by the CPS. Concern was expressed about whether these changes would be detrimental to animal welfare. It was understood that the RSPCA would continue to investigate cases of animal cruelty and hand over evidence to the CPS. Final decisions about a changing role for the RSPCA have yet to be clarified. There is some overlap between the work of the APS and RSPCA.

3. Norwegian SPCA Current Court Case

Ashild Roaldset (Norwegian SPCA) outlined the current court case in Norway against the Norwegian Kennel Club, the Cavalier Club, British Bulldog Club, plus 6 breeders.

Ashild began by outlining the law as it stands in Norway: animals must function well and have good health and breeders and their organisations are accountable. EU Guidelines promote the use of Estimated Breeding Values, natural mating and monitoring inbreeding at a population level.

Science has provided plenty of evidence of the immense suffering of some pedigree dogs as a result of selection for appearance rather than health. Some breeds can't be 'saved' when their health and welfare problems within their closed gene pool are so severe and widespread.

The use of some genetic tests or health schemes whilst ignoring the other health problems does not improve the overall health of a breed. It's important that dog health and welfare takes into account Estimated Breeding Values and Effective Population Size. Breeding should not be about preserving anything. It should only be about producing healthy and fully functioning animals.

Temperament is another important welfare issue. Selection which focuses on appearance and ignores temperament also needs to be addressed.

NSPCA decided to take action as it became clear that breeders and dog governing bodies were not protecting dogs. This action has resulted in much criticism from dog breeders and their organisations. Despite this the NSPCA will continue to pursue the court action.

'Our loyalty should be to the animals, not to human interests.'

DBRG will keep in touch with Ashild and follow the progress of this case closely.

4. Breed Posters

A template has been created and it is planned to complete posters for the 50 most popular breeds. The posters will be available on the DBRG website and it is hoped that CFSG will support this initiative. CF will present the breed posters for discussion at the CFSG meeting which she will be attending on 17 September.

It is also hoped that the LA inspectors will find them useful in learning about the health issues suffered by each different breed.

It was discussed that some of the issues listed on the posters may not be as prevalent as the posters suggest, and it would be sensible for Breed Health Coordinators, and Breed Clubs to be asked to give input to the drafts. LF agreed to be the liaison between DBRG and Breed Clubs.

The intended audience for the posters is the general public and the format and language is designed with that in mind. DBRG will also offer them to the local authority group as part of their training and inspection work.

Action LF and CF

5. Scottish SPCA

Gilly Ferreira presented the new SPCA Assured Puppy Breeders Scheme. It was explained that the scheme is open to any active breeder, and all must be inspected annually. The SPCA inspectors will also undertake unannounced visits, and stringent background checks are put in place before any breeder is accepted. The SPCA work from Canine Health Schemes to ensure that the correct testing is being carried out, and also use the Dog Breed Health website.

It was pointed out that the scheme is in its infancy, and SPCA would be happy to work with DBRG and take advice. AG agreed to be the liaison between DBRG and the SPCA.

6. Sector Issues

The deadline for comments on the Welsh Government dog breeding licensing conditions consultation is the 17th September. CF agreed to draft a document to respond, and comments by DBRG members requested by the 14th September.

The difference in animal welfare law between England, Wales and Scotland was discussed and it was agreed by all that the Assured Puppy Breeder Scheme was a major step forward in animal welfare in Scotland, and Gilly Ferreira and her team were highly commended by DBRG members.

7. CFSG AGM

CF to attend and DBRG have a 10 minute slot to introduce the Breed Posters as breed specific information for puppy buyers and how they might be applied to the LA inspector training module.

Action CF

8. LA Inspectors Training Module

CF has made contact with Sharon Edwards of the City of London Authority with a view to discussing a training programme, and the Breed Posters. It was pointed out that the SPCA is also working on training material for Scottish inspectors and they would be happy to share the information with DBRG. Gilly Ferreira will liaise with AG to forward to DBRG.

Action AG

9. Home Breeders Association (HBA)

The Home Breeders Association are currently campaigning to remove the business test from licensing requirements as they believe that it is too stringent. The HBA is also an associate member of the CFSG, and it is believed that the CFSG may be in support of removing the business test for home breeders. It was therefore mooted that DBRG may also support the removal of this test. However DBRG members are currently not in support of removal. It was suggested that the whole dog breeding industry requires regulation, and home breeders should not be excluded from regulation.

It was discussed whether DBRG should engage with the HBA, and consensus was that it would be constructive for DBRG to engage with them, with the aim of sharing DBRG's ethos. It was agreed that a representative should be invited to the next meeting in December. LF agreed to be liaison.

Action LF

10. Symposium

Unfortunately the Symposium has sold only 18 tickets to date. There was discussion about whether it would be possible to create an on-line event but constraints such as expertise, and licensing would mean that the management would probably have to be outsourced. Due to this it was reluctantly decided to cancel the Symposium for this November, and rearrange for 2022.

The sponsors who have already given funds to DBRG would be contacted immediately and hopefully will agree to defer sponsorship to the 2022 event.

Action

CF to liaise with Surrey Vet School to agree a suitable date in November 2022

EGM to liaise with sponsors

11. DEFRA Meeting

A meeting between CF, her MP, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown and DEFRA officials has been agreed. The Code of Practice for Dog Breeding, and Guidelines on Extreme Conformation will be discussed. Also DBRG's recommendations for the Review of Licensing Regulations.

12. Follow Up Meeting with the Kennel Club

Bill Lambert has sent an email in response to the meeting, and the minutes and it was felt that communication between the KC and DBRG has not been as productive as hoped.

Going forward it was questioned as to the format any further communication should take. Some felt that the effort and resources involved in meeting with the KC, do not justify the response and outcome. However, others pointed out that the culture in the KC is changing albeit slowly.

A follow up meeting is planned for March 2022, and it was agreed that the Code of Practice for Dog Breeding would be discussed. It was suggested that a more focused agenda is needed when communicating with the KC.

13. Language used in relation to dogs

The language used when describing dogs, (and other animals) is not always conducive to promoting welfare. For example the word 'it' is often used instead of 'he' or 'she'. However CR pointed out that care must also be taken not to anthropomorphise dogs and other animals . It was agreed that the topic is an interesting one, and it was agreed that DON, FC and CF would expand on this topic via an email dialogue and report back to the group.

Action DON FC CF

14. AOB

Dates for Next Year – it was agreed a Doodle Poll would be created

Date of Next Meeting 9 December. Chaired by CR