



## Notes of DBRG Meeting 2 March 2017

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

### Members Present

Carol Fowler (CF), Dan O'Neill (DON), Chris Laurence (CL) Charlotte Mackaness (CM), Lesley Field (LF), David Grimsell (DG) (via teleconferencing), Fiona Cooke (FC), Julia Charlton (JC), Stephen Charlton (SC), Katharine Williams (KW)

### Advisors present

Sheila Crispin (SC), Vicki Betton (VB), Gudrun Ravetz (GR), Marisa Heath (MH)

### Guest speaker

Mike Radford (MR), University of Aberdeen, Animal Welfare Law

### Guest Member of Parliament

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Co-Chairman, Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare, Dog Sub-Group)

### Apologies

Clare Rusbridge, Martin Whiting, Tania Ledger, Rowena Packer

## 1. Matters arising

- Annual Report completed and distributed to members
- DBRG's Comment on *Defra Response to the Efra Committee Animal Welfare Report* completed and sent in February
- DBRG's Response to the *DEFRA Review of Animal Establishments Licensing: Next steps* completed and sent in February
- DBRG Response to the *Ireland Review of Guidelines for the Dog Breeding Establishments Act* completed and sent in February

- Email sent to Marisa Heath formally requesting membership of the Puppy Group when re-established. MH has informed us that the Puppy Group is currently dormant.
- Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Heart Scheme. It is understood that a meeting of cardiologists, Kennel Club and Cavalier breed clubs representatives have met to discuss an improvement to the existing breed clubs' heart testing scheme.
- DBRG's Wish List for a better world for dogs has been sent to vet and author, Emma Milne

## 2. Animal Welfare Act

Since the last time this was discussed DEFRA has issued its *'Review of animal establishments licensing in England: Next steps'* and has responded to the Efra Committee Report: *'Animal welfare in England: domestic pets.'* The meeting was told that although there is potential progress in the proposals the strategy is fundamentally flawed. The devil will be in the detail of the wording in the guidance and regulations. In order to achieve the best welfare of breeding bitches and puppies we need a system that provides traceability back to the breeder. We need a comprehensive system which is transparent, not only in holding breeders and sellers to account, but because local authorities (LAs) will not have the resources to fund the changes. The only way new regulations can be enforced is for the public to monitor what is going on and report problems to LAs.

The group was informed that CARIAD has produced a very useful document (Local Authority Issued Dog Breeding Permit) for those breeding less than three litters per year, based on the council tax reference number, which includes details of how such numbers would be compiled. The label 'Puppy Permit' seems an easily understood term to use for those registered breeders.

The question was posed, should a dog's welfare turn on the circumstances in which it happens to be bred? The welfare of every dog should be society's concern regardless of the accident of birth.

**Micro-chipping:** the micro-chipping law as it stands also presents a problem because it was introduced with the intention of re-uniting a lost dog with its owner exclusively. This is a worthy purpose but does not provide a traceability system for breeders and sellers. If it could be demonstrated that the use of the system was for a welfare purpose, it could be laid before Parliament as

regulations under the Animal Welfare Act. The scope of micro-chipping needs to be widened and the first recorded owner on the microchip should be retained. The breeder must be the first recorded keeper.

The group was made aware of the work of Stewart Everett who has created the single database for horses. Stewart is open to the idea of creating a single data base for dogs.

It was agreed that we should add a DBRG Objective regarding micro-chipping and traceability.

### **3. The Standard for Dog Breeding and National Inspection Scheme**

The working group has updated the Dog Advisory Council's Standard for Dog Breeding and it is now on the DBRG website as the DBRG Standard. It was agreed that it should represent the 'Gold Standard' for dog breeding.

A draft business plan is underway for the National Inspection Scheme (NIS) which will be a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (COI). It is intended to apply to breeders of any dogs – purebred or mixed breed. It is intended that it will be compatible with DEFRA's proposed risk-based approach to local authority inspections and licensing.

The Scheme will be separate from DBRG.

Breeders would apply for membership of the Scheme initially on line through an on-line assessment. This would be followed by an on-line pre-assessment and finally an inspection.

It is thought that this would appeal to those breeders who wish to be regarded as high welfare, ethical breeders. It will also appeal to puppy buyers who wish to source their puppy from a breeder with the highest welfare standards. A draft Code of Ethics has been prepared.

The working group will put together a business plan and do further work to set out the details of the Scheme. The aim would be to launch the Scheme in Spring 2018.

### **4. DBRG Symposium at the University of Surrey Vet School**

A provisional programme has been drawn up with Dr Clare Rusbridge and Professor Sheila Crispin as speakers. There is a meeting with DBRG members on 30 March with Dr Rusbridge and Julia Gerhold at Surrey to discuss details.

## **5. DBRG position on third party sale of puppies**

There has been much discussion about this recently in view of the decision by DEFRA not to ban the third party sale of puppies in spite of the recommendation of the EFRA Committee. DBRG will retain its opposition to third party sales as we believe that this practice is associated with poor welfare and the lack of transparency and traceability

**Responsibility of vets in the inspection of licensed premises.** An additional point was raised regarding the responsibility of vets when inspecting the premises of licensed breeders

## **6. Policy Papers**

1) Licensing and Registration of Dog Breeders and Sale of Puppies

2) Health Testing

These are now finalised, distributed to members, and uploaded on the DBRG website.

Papers in progress include: Brachycephaly; Third Party Sale of Puppies; The Animal Welfare Act and the Protection of Offspring; Microchipping

## **AOB**

Thanks was expressed to Dogs Trust for their generous donation of £3,500 which brings our funding to £5192. .

## **Next meeting**

22 June 2017