

Meeting Thurs 3 December 2020, Zoom (2.00 – 5.00pm) (Chair CR)

The objects of the charity ('the objects') are:

To promote humane behaviour towards animals by providing and supporting initiatives to improve dog welfare related to:

a) genetic and breed related health, breeding, rearing and selling practices;

b) to inform the general public about irresponsible dog breeding in order to make them aware of the potential impact on their dogs' health and welfare

Notes of Meeting

Members present: Clare Rusbridge (CR), Carol Fowler (CF), Dan O'Neill (DO), Emma Milne (EM), Andrew Gillon (AG); Rowena Packer (RP), Lesley Field (LF), Samantha McQuigg (SM), Tania Ledger (TL); Vicki Betton (VB)

Apologies: Katharine Williams, Polly Smith

1. Matters arising

There were none.

2. Symposium 2021 (Sunday 7 Nov)

Date confirmed in Univ Surrey events calendar; agreed sponsorship of £2000 from CEVA; confirmation of programme and speakers; fully automated ticket sales from website will be set up by Steve; Peter Egan has agreed to attend and speak personally about the human and dog bond. Brief discussion about having some extra stands in the atrium at Surrey. It was agreed that it would add interest but commercial companies would need to pay unless they were offering sponsorship. EM suggested that companies which produce skin-related products could be approached but would need to be carefully chosen to avoid commercial competition. Start with Purina who sponsored the previous symposium and clarify what stipulations CEVA have. Outline programme of speakers and titles agreed. CF will resend programme to DBRG members and to the other speakers for confirmation of details. We need to promote the Symposium as soon as possible, focusing on the speakers via social media and specific skin problems in dogs. It was suggested that Polly could post a tweet at least monthly with help from vet members. Promotion will start as soon as ticket sales are up and running in January.

ACTION EM, CF, CR, PS

3. Involvement of Student Ambassadors (CP)

A Zoom meeting took place on 4 November with CP, CF and Student Ambassadors. This was to meet the students and get to know them better and also to discuss how they could be more involved. Social media was the obvious area where the students could spread the word about DBRG – promoted through the university student pages. It was suggested that the students could be involved with creating graphics for social media.

CP to contact PS to liaise. Also students can be involved in promoting the Symposium including liaising with their university AW societies. (CR is talking to RVC students about CMSM and will include a mention of DBRG). It was agreed that DBRG members could meet with student members via a one hour Zoom meeting. Carol to give a 10 minute introduction and Emma will speak for 30 minutes on an agreed topic related to dog genetic health. DBRG students could bring along another student colleague who might be interested in joining.

ACTION CP and AG (Doodle poll for meeting)

4. Code of Practice for Dog Breeding: promotion; circulation; endorsement

The Code of Practice is now displayed on the CFSG website and its chairman is keen to promote the COP wherever possible. CFSG chairman has informed Defra about the Code but no meeting or response has occurred yet due to Covid. It was suggested that UK Vet Schools could acknowledge both the COP and Conformation Guidelines. AG has forwarded the Code to the SSPCA and FC has shared with behaviour groups. Further promotion of the COP and Conformation Guidelines should be made via DBRG social media in the new year. The BSAVA will promote the Code in January via its various media outlets and newsletter. EM suggested that FECAVA and WSAVA should be aware. It was agreed that a DBRG link with FECAVA and WSAVA would be appropriate. EM will contact FECAVA and WSAVA.

ACTION EM PS

5. DBRG Standard for Dog Breeding: is it still relevant in the light of the 2018 Regulations and COP for Dog Breeding and Guidelines on Conformation?

This was discussed and it was agreed that the COP has largely replaced the Standard for Dog Breeding. The Standard also overlaps with the 2018 Regulations. It was agreed that the Standard should be kept for reference and be added to the Welfare Reports page.

ACTION CF

6. Discussion and questions for meeting with KC

A draft list of topics and questions had been prepared by CF which it was agreed should be refined and shortened to enable the best outcome from the meeting with the KC CEO in February. Crucial to the meeting is that it is a two way process and that both sides gain. Our expectations include the hope that a new CEO with a welfare background might respond

favourably to some of our concerns and suggestions. It was agreed to focus on those areas which are more likely to be realistic in terms of the KCs traditions and priorities. We aim for outcomes and actions and need to have clear objectives. The aim could be that DBRG has an on-going dialogue with the KC. This would depend on whether we feel it would be productive and also whether it would be worthwhile from the KC's point of view. Collaboration already exists in groups such as CAWG and CFSG but it was felt it would be constructive to work more specifically on the areas of concern that we share with the KC.

It was agreed that EM, FC, LF will rework the draft document to focus more specifically on fewer key areas: COP for Dog Breeding; Guidelines on Conformation; Puppy Contract; health testing; the health of show dogs and activity dogs; single microchip database connected to the KC registration number; actions and recent legislation in other countries. It was agreed that DBRG members should convene a one hour before the KC meeting.

ACTION EM, FC, LF

7. 'Pandemic Puppy' and related problems. What action, if any, should DBRG take on this issue? (TL)

The issue is a serious and unexpected welfare problem which relates in the main to non KC breeders who are cashing in on the demand for puppies as a result of the COVID pandemic. Prices for puppies have rocketed. RP has already circulated the Pandemic Puppy Survey which stays open until the end of December. It was agreed that DBRG should include the issue in its social media output along with other welfare organisations. It was suggested that DBRG should be warning owners in particular about genetic diseases which in the main is not being included by other welfare groups. Regarding social media messaging, it was suggested that DBRG should make more use of graphics as a way of reaching a bigger audience. It was agreed that it is crucial to increase our social media activity with positive messages about acquiring a puppy. TL offered to produce a graphic poster specifically for DBRG. CF will contact PS to suggest other DBRG members are given the passwords and logins to message FB and Twitter.

ACTION TL, CF, PS

8. Focusing on key inherited health issues in dogs. (DON)

There is much evidence now that the common disorders such as arthritis and poor dentition are inherited. Conditions for which there are genetic tests are often not as serious or widespread as conditions for which there is currently no test. Conditions may be ignored by breeders and puppy buyers because there isn't a genetic test for them and inheritance is complex. It was suggested that DBRG should include these other problems which are detrimental to dog health and are linked to poor husbandry. Any disease that occurs more commonly in one breed than another has an inherited component. It follows that inherited diseases should be prioritised according to the welfare of the animal based on prevalence,

severity and duration. The data produced every day by practising vets provides us with this evidence. DON suggested that this is something DBRG should focus on. VB referenced the study by AWF Edinburgh, '*Prioritisation of animal welfare issues in the UK using expert consensus*,' Rioja-Lang, et al which highlighted genetic diseases (the results of breeding decisions) as one of the key welfare issues. VB will forward this report to members. DON recommended that we should widen the scope of what is a genetic disease to include anything that is breed related. It was agreed that we should return to this topic at a future meeting.

9. Puppy Contracts: key differences AWF PC compare with ABS (EM)

EM has carried out a detailed comparison of the two contracts and summarised this in a document sent to DBRG members prior to this meeting. The main finding is that the contracts themselves have identical wording but the puppy information packs of the AWF and KC ABS contracts are very different. The KC ABS PIP focuses on breeders and is excellent on advice to new owners on caring for their puppy when they get home. However there is no mention of inherited health other than one line on the last page of the ABS PIP. AWF has an entire page devoted to health and also empowers buyers by prompting them to ask the right questions.

There was concern that the KC ABS contract applies only to the small proportion of breeders who are members of the Scheme. DBRG members are concerned also that KC ABS breeders are promoted as being of the highest standard and yet there is an absence of information and advice on genetic health or the importance of genetic diversity. It was also noted that the ABS Puppy Contract was very difficult to find on the KC website.

In the absence of any recommended puppy contract for non ABS breeders who register their puppies with the KC, DBRG members felt that the AWF contract could be used by them. Members felt that the KC could promote the AWF contract to their non ABS breeders.

LF reported that there are many good breeders who want the KC to go further, some of whom currently produce their own puppy contract. LF also pointed out that KC registration certificates no longer show health results.

It was agreed by all that discussion about the Puppy Contracts should be included in the meeting with the KC CEO.

Members are referred to EM's more detailed written comparison of the two puppy contracts and both of the actual contracts and PIPs. This is important to our work.

Action All – familiarity with the two Contracts and PIPs

10. Update on Areas of Focus: unlicensed breeders to be included in Regulations and liable to prosecution by local authorities

Recent discussions discovered a major loophole in the 2018 Regulations. Non-licensed breeders ('hobby breeders') are not subject to local authority action in the case of the failure to protect offspring from inherited health and welfare issues. It was agreed that the Areas of Focus document should be updated to include this.

It was noted also that another area of focus included in the document was the registration of all breeders with their local authority and these two points are linked.

The point was made that many unlicensed breeders would fail the business test especially with the rising price of puppies. HMRC are aware.

Members have been sent a copy of the updated December 2020 Areas of Focus document.

11. DBRG Policies 2020

The recently revised document contains our agreed policies and definitions so far. All full members have received a copy of this. There was some discussion around our definition of a healthy dog and an acknowledgement of how difficult it would be to arrive at a definition that others might agree to. However, it is our definition at the present time.

It was agreed that the time spent on achieving these policy definitions has been very worthwhile and has focused our minds on what DBRG is about.

12. Meeting dates and chairing rota for 2021

Dates for 2021 meetings were agreed as: Thurs 11 March (DON); Thurs 3 June (AG); Thurs 9 Sept (FC); Thurs 9 Dec (CR)

13. AOB

Traffic to DBRG website.

Efforts have been made to improve this and the website should be regularly referred to via DBRG social media. Google ads has been set up on the recommendation of Steve Tolmie and the monthly login is managed by Emma and Mark. Making our website content more available to puppy buyers is an on-going challenge.

