



## **AGENDA**

### **DOG & CAT WELFARE**

**Rebecca Pow MP, Angela Smith MP, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Henry Smith MP, Lord Trees, Baroness Masham, Rob Ffello MP**

#### **1) Welcome and Introductions**

Geoffrey Clifton Brown MP pointed out that the Dog Sub-Group had not been active for some time and that it had not been re-constituted since the 2015 election. He informed members that he would like to be actively involved in the group once again as he had been when it started.

Political members agreed that the Group should be re-constituted. Angela Smith and Geoffrey Clifton Brown both wished to lead the group. After a discussion both were voted in as co-chairs. It was also pointed out that whilst he was not present, Rob Ffello MP had a continuing interest in dog welfare and had previously led the Sub-Group so members suggested that he continue to be involved and work alongside the chairs as a decision maker. Members felt this enabled the group to function as it would have three political members to support it and would be cross-party

Members then considered possible topics to cover which included: Microchipping and traceability, Protection of offspring under AWA, Licensing and registration of dog breeders, Standards of trainers and behaviourists

Angela Smith MP suggested foremost the group needed to reviewing the existing strategy and where it has got to.

Lord Trees suggested it might want to look at pet travel and Brexit as well as the issue of dangerous dogs which is not going away and needs attention.

#### **2) Establishing Standards for Behaviourists and Trainers and Improving Responsible Dog Ownership**

Henry Smith MP - In the 2015 APGAW Dog Strategy it was identified that there is a lack of clarity for the public on how to access help of a good standard to assist with training and behaviourist advice. As one of the main drivers for abandonment of dogs in particular is behavioural problems which have spiraled out of control, tackling them at the first stages is crucial to reducing the numbers coming into charity kennels as well the demand for more puppies to replace them. As MPs we want safe societies and dog control is a feature in this if people are not able to control their dogs and cause fear for others around them. Dog bites have continued to increase and other problems such as dog fights have also risen.

To be able to signpost people to help is crucial and to deliver consistent messaging around this is also important. For example, we need the public to understand how to get a well socialized puppy at the very beginning and then that training is over the entire lifespan of the dog not just for a first couple of months at puppy classes.

**Expert Panel:**

**Rosie Barclay - ASAB Certificated Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CCAB). Full Member of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) Animal Behaviour & Training Council (ABTC) Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist**

Responsible dog owners need to be able to access the best advice regarding training and behaviour. Before they even obtain a dog they will need to know how to access this information. Breeders need to know the best advice to make sure the puppies in their care get the best start in life. Such as understanding the importance of early socialization that will help reduce future behavioural problems. They also need to know what information to pass onto the new owners. Rescue centers need to know who they can trust when looking to employ a trainer or behaviourist who will help the dogs in their care and can give the best advice to future owners. Owners need to know where to take their puppy for puppy classes, their dogs to dog training classes where they will be assured of getting the best advice. They also need to know where to go if their dog begins to show problematic behaviour such as aggression or becoming anxious when left alone. The trouble is the training and behaviour industry is not regulated so who knows?

As the APGAW report states the understanding of dog behaviour and welfare has improved and advanced significantly over the years. We can also say the same for cats, rabbits, horses and other pets. The report also points out that there are some theories and techniques that are outdated and that can potentially place dog welfare at risk and can make behavioral problems worse and even place people in danger. These theories and techniques are still widely practiced and taught leading to poor responsible pet ownership. There are no requirements or signposting in place to make sure that those practicing, teaching and designing courses are keeping up to date with current scientific understanding. So how can we make sure pet owners are getting the best advice and students are gaining the best knowledge and skill sets?

In 2010 The Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC)([www.abtcouncil.org.uk](http://www.abtcouncil.org.uk)) was formed when influential organisations involved in the sector came together to discuss the formalisation of standards and how to implement them. Since then the Council has become established as the most widely supported regulatory authority with nineteen high profile organisations as members including those representing the veterinary profession, leading animal and behaviour and training organisations and many of the established animal welfare charities with more applying. It is an independent regulatory body, publically accountable and a member of the British Standards Institution. It also has charity status. The ABTC alongside industry leaders have already agreed the standards of knowledge and the skills needed. It is also in the process of assessing sector courses so we can be assured that those offered also meet the relevant standards for each role. Therefore, we are part way there. With support from those not yet on board and legislation to secure these standards we can make sure that the advice people receive is the best they can get to become responsible pet owners.

There is an old adage that says 'The only thing two dog trainers can agree on is that the third trainer is wrong!' So it is well known in this sector that not everyone gets along. There are also an awful lot of egos in this industry. I think this has a lot to do with the fact that quite a few organisations rely on selling their own training and behaviour courses. There is a commercial aspect to this that can lead to a them and us situation. You buy your course, you become a member of that club, you can use the logo and stick meaningless post-nominals after your name. These courses, organisations and their members are generally not independently assessed or accredited. They assess and accredit everything themselves. This is where the Animal Behavior and Training Council come in as they independently assess each organisation to see if the courses and the individuals meet the standards required. What has happened is that some organisations especially if commercially driven do not want to 'come together' and set up their own councils for their own affiliated organisations.

It is important to state that the mental health of our animals is just as important as their physical health. In September this year the British Veterinary Association shockingly announced that in a survey of over 700 vets 98% of those who had been asked to euthanise a healthy pet cited the owner's reason as their pet's behaviour. So we have to get this right. We must not compromise the welfare of our pets by offering cheap alternatives that might lead to a lowering of standards. Part of the answer lies with the welfare and veterinary charities employing suitably qualified behaviorists. It is crucial that we get informed messages across about responsible ownership with the best advice possible given by the right people. Poor and potentially dangerous information is too readily available. The more sector organisations that join the Animal and Behaviour training council the stronger the council gets and the more people receive the right information. By highlighting this issue it also gives the veterinary profession somewhere to go they can trust when they need to refer for behavioral issues or suggest training sessions. It would also raise public awareness if vets also ask their clients not only how their pets physical health is doing but also their mental health.

I strongly believe The ABTC is the way forward and more than meets recommendation 3 in the APGAW report.

**David Montgomery - BSc (Hons) (Psychology/Animal Behaviour), representing ABTC, Member (Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour), Member (British Veterinary Behaviour Association)**

Education pre-ownership and responsible breeders will start the socialisation and habituation process prior to collection of a new puppy and offer advice regarding continuation of the process. Quality of the training classes (puppy parties, early training and follow up training) is important in terms of what and how the dogs and their owners are being taught and the credentials of the trainers. The problem is ensuring quality as currently there is nothing stopping anybody watching a few tv programmes and setting up in business, calling themselves and expert and taking money from owners who would not know to question their credentials. There is wide use of meaningless post nominal letters and unsubstantiated claims of being qualified or certified. Rogue television programmes often use editing which makes potentially complex situations look as if the fix is almost magical. People are led to believe that this a job anybody can do and one international celebrity is responsible for untold damage by spreading outdated information and demonstrating harmful methods.

Unethical advertising is widespread with organisations making claims of superiority or expertise without any evidence or independent verification to support them. A person or organisation's expertise is generally judged by their marketing material rather than their actual ability or qualification.

The reason the sector has struggled to come together into one single entity and agree a joint way forward is mainly egos, insecurity and profits. To a large extent it has come together in the form of the ABTC but there are still a number of vocal dissenters who feel no compulsion to comply with the requirements, have no recognition of ABTC's place in the sector or even feel that they could do a better job. Some feel it might threaten their income and reputation, some do not believe the science behind contemporary explanations of behaviour. For newcomers it is not a problem being faced with a structured pathway of training, education and assessment (so long as they choose a responsible starting point). The established trainers and behaviourists frequently resist the idea of having to 'measure up' to a standard, the longer they have been established the greater the resistance.

There are not that many different approaches to training and behaviour, simply adaptations of core psychological principles. Five different behaviourists may come up with five different regimes to address one issue but as the education and experience grows those approaches will tend to converge. Without appropriate education there is a tendency to rely on quick fixes which are often characterised by the use of punishment. Leaving aside the

ethical issues of inducing fear or pain for a moment the results are often not reliable and can come with unintended consequences, particularly the damage it can do to the all-important dog/owner bond.

As an industry we need the high standards but we also need to be accessible. There is already a model for ensuring that animals can receive essential treatment when owners cannot afford to pay in the PDSA. ABTC is a charity aimed at regulating training and behaviour and safeguarding animal welfare when undergoing such interventions, it is not a huge leap to suggest that ABTC could develop along the lines of PDSA raising the funds to pay for, or subsidise interventions. We already have a network of 744 properly assessed trainers and behaviourists around the UK who vets and local authorities could call upon to undertake such work. That number is predicted to be in excess of 1000 by early next year. We are also working closely with the BVNA to develop training for veterinary nurses so that appropriate interventions can be delivered in practice.

As long as ABTC has no authority beyond its members it will always be a partial system. The sector, under ABTC, has organised itself almost as far as it can as a voluntary self-regulated profession but the potential for much greater development that will contribute enormously to animal welfare is huge. In order to become fully effective it needs clear, unequivocal political support and I would call upon Defra to implement Recommendation 3 of the APGAW 2015 Dog Strategy Report and endorse a suitable industry standard and independent regulatory body.

**David Caviil- Founded the Animal Care College in 1980 where courses include understanding canine, feline and equine psychology and animal behaviour. He is a Kennel Club Accredited Trainer.**

The most serious concern as I see it is a lack of understanding of competency amongst too many organisations which purport to recognise dog trainers, canine behaviourists. Consequently the public is inevitably confused. If you google "I Train Dogs" you will find over 40 organisations listed which are of sufficient size to be credible and which suggest they meet occupational standards -although I'm afraid this is all too often not the case. People learn something about training dogs in a training class or through one of the many colleges or workshops and too many do not provide information or knowledge which is meaningful or accurate. In 2008 the Companion Animal Welfare Council published a very detailed report that described the sector as 'chaotic.' Shortly afterwards, CAWC attempted to bring some semblance of order to the sector by hosting three meetings: they were well attended but they were hard work and only served to demonstrate the difficulties. One positive thing which did come out of it was an agreed Code of Practice which some felt did not provide enough detail but all could at least sign up to. It also meant a dialogue began between some groups which continues and I hope will enable further progress to be made. For instance, although it was difficult to persuade everyone to sign up to them, Occupational Standards for the sector have now been established and published by the Skills Council.

A group of established training and canine behavioural organisations formed The Pet Education, Training and Behaviour Council in 2009 and this was followed by the Animal Behaviour and Training Council the following year. The key difference is that although the ABTC appears to have many organisations attached to it such as the RSPCA, Dogs Trust, Blue Cross and veterinary organisations, most are not directly involved with dog training and behavioural modification. Either way, PETbc and ABTC only represent a small fraction of the total number of organisations which are out there providing what they consider to be the 'best' advice.

The PETBC perspective is that dog training and most behaviourist work is not rocket science. Of course, those involved need knowledge and understanding but crucially they need experience. Every circumstance is slightly different but a lot of good dog training does not need a graduate or, as demanded by some groups, post-graduate qualification although there have to be realistic standards. There is not a 'one size fits all' criteria and to

'straitjacket' organisations and their members will not improve dog behaviour in society. Our serious concern is that the sector is moving away from the idea that dogs and other animals need rules and boundaries: we appear to have abandoned the idea that rules should be applied. For instance, if you see a puppy chewing an electrical cable you clearly have to stop it. Too many trainers and behaviourists will tell you that you do not say, 'No'. They think that what you should do is to distract it with something it finds more interesting. But think about it: if you distract it with something pleasurable that is a reward and in fact you end up encouraging it to eat the cable. There is no doubt that positive reinforcement has to be the best way to train puppies and dogs to do things but it is wrong to think that there should never be any negative reinforcement because this is the only way in which you can train them not to do things. Negative reinforcement does not have to be cruel or unkind, a sharp 'No', and deep growl or a clap of the hands draws a line but does not reward. We need to raise awareness that animals need to behave in a particular way within society and they need to have a structure and framework of behaviour just as we adults and, of course, children do to. A key element of this is proper socialisation from the nest ongoing throughout puppy hood.

APGAW should take on board the recommendation currently in Defra's ballpark that we make a requirement for all of those professionally involved in caring of animals to be registered. It would be inexpensive and easy to administer. If all trainers, groomers, home boarders, dog walkers and others professionally involved with caring for dogs were registered with their local authority it would enable us to have the data we need to develop a strategy which is practical and workable.

**Robert Alleyne - Member of The Canine Training and Behaviour Society, Member of the Kennel Club.  
Behavioural trainer on the BBC3 series Dog Borstal.**

The number of dogs being put into rescue is increasing at an alarming rate. A few years ago Battersea Dogs & Cats Home had to close its doors for the first time, as it had no more space. A rescue centre I work with conducted a survey on the dogs being relinquished and the results were very worrying in that they found that just over 80% of people who were giving their dogs up for behaviour or training issues had previously been to a trainer or a behaviourist, and yet the average age of a dog being given to them was just 8 months of age. All of these people had paid someone to help them train their dog and yet by the time of only 8 months they had given up on it. For most of my clients, I am not their first trainer or behaviourist, or even their second. This is not necessarily because the first trainer was ineffective but perhaps because the owner wanted a miracle cure that meant they did not fully invest in the training. But for many it is due to the ineffective training which was given to them. The concept of reward only dog training is by far the most common approach, that we should ignore dogs bad behaviour and reward them when they are good in the hope that the behaviour we are unhappy with will fade away. It is noteworthy that this concept took on in the 80s around the time we were told we should not publish our children. And we can see how well that has worked out. Like children, dogs need structure and boundaries. There is a need to create these boundaries even in the wild. Dogs use consequences on each other including their own offspring, yet we are now so arrogant that we believe we can train dogs better than dogs can. I know many reward only behaviourists who themselves have extremely badly behaved dogs. They cannot make the techniques work on their dog. My concern is that if large numbers of experts are using techniques which do not even work on their own dogs why are they making clients pay for the same technique, and how likely are they to be successful? Trainers advise people to turn their back on dogs who jump up or to simply ignore them. Have you ever used ignoring to stop a dog jumping up - I asked this question on social media which received hundreds of responses about the fact it does not work for many dog owners. Indeed only 3 responses said it worked for them and they were all trainers or behaviourists.

When I started training dogs over 30 years ago there were no academic courses, now there are dozens. This raises problems in itself as there are courses you can now do over just one weekend which will give you a diploma as a behaviourist, or are written by someone who has never themselves trained a dog. Despite seeming to work scientifically, some methods of training are sometimes so labour intensive that they would be almost impossible to apply in reality and that needs to be understood by those who have no practical experience of what does and does not work. There is now such diversity of training styles that few can agree on what is the right technique and once you have adopted a style, if research then comes back to suggest it is wrong it can be hard to accept or adapt or start over. Training that uses any form of consequence is considered to be out of date and non-scientific so advocates of reward only believe any form of force must be eliminated from dog training. Reward only dog training is seen as based on modern science but this approach has actually been in use since the 80s, so can hardly be called 'modern'. It is reliant on you always being able to offer a reward greater than the one the dog can obtain for itself and if not the case the training fails. Dogs with no boundaries are now a massive problem.

Socialisation is another hugely important aspect. Everyone tells owners the importance of socialisation but nobody tells them how to do it. Many confuse this with over-exposure by taking their puppy to the wrong type of classes, but if the classes are not run by knowledgeable trainers or behaviourists with a strong practical background, it can cause more problems than it solves. Some of the worst puppy socialisation classes and puppy parties I have seen have been run in vet surgeries where the nurses are not trained in recognizing and advising on training and behavioural issues. Puppies can easily develop problems at these classes which become little more than gladiatorial arenas where puppies spend an hour or two beating up other puppies. There are now even online puppy training courses where you never actually have to work with a dog but you can get a qualification at the end. A few years ago I met a woman who would not speak to me just because I am a behaviourist. The following year I saw she was advertising herself on her website as the UK's leading behaviourist without ever having formally studied behavior. When I spoke to her she said dog trainers earn 30% less than behaviorists so now she's a behaviourist.

On the cost of getting in a trainer or behaviourist, I don't think the majority are too expensive for the service they offer as long as it is good. If you cannot afford to train your dog you should not have one. While I support The Animal Behaviour & Training Council, and agree that there is a need for accountability and regulation, it needs to bring in a qualification for behaviourists which sets out the need to actually work with dogs on a practical basis, not just the academics

Henry Smith MP – We need to talk to the new Minister, Lord Gardiner, on the issue of regulation and follow up this work through the Sub-Group for Dogs in the new year to put APGAW in a positioning of understanding and setting out the best way for members of the public to obtain help and advice from qualified, experienced professionals.

### **1) The Big Tick Project (Bristol University and MSD Animal Health)**

A team of vets alongside Chris Packham are monitoring the increasing population of ticks carrying potentially fatal diseases for both animals and humans in the UK. The project seeks to raise awareness about the dangers of ticks and educate pet owners on how to protect against them.

Speakers:

**Elizabeth Peplow, Amanda Melvin and Hannah Newbury**

The Big Tick Project, a collaboration between the University of Bristol and MSD Animal Health is the largest ever study of ticks in dogs in the UK. The results were published this autumn, and have potentially significant implications for health and wellbeing for our pets as well as the future of the Pet Travel Scheme.

In 2015 we launched the project to look at tick distribution and the pathogens they carry prior to publicity on Lyme Disease and before the outbreaks of Canine Babesiosis in March this year. We wanted to understand what diseases the ticks are carrying. We had 1250 veterinary practices participate and 6500 ticks were received which was a bigger number than the 1000 we were expecting. It was robust study and we found most were an endemic tick in the UK from the northern tip of Scotland all the way to the South Coast. We also asked vets to note if dogs had travelled in the two weeks before the vet visit. 57 dogs had travelled and out of them 76% were carrying a tick. Of those 13 were the Rhipicephalus tick which is the brown dog tick originating from the southern European base and there have been cases of that tick establishing itself in homes in the UK as its life cycle means it lays eggs in the crevices of walls. They can feed on humans too and transmit diseases.

One of the concerns is with the relaxation of the Pet Travel Scheme gave the message out to owners and some vets that ticks do not matter anymore. Tick control has been removed from the Scheme so it is not seen as important. As a result, we are seeing ticks carrying Babesiosis Canis which is potentially fatal to dogs. In March the first cluster of Babesiosis Canis of dogs in Essex was reported and there are endemic pockets in Wales, Essex and the Somerset/Devon area.

To develop a consensus across the industry, we invited key opinion leaders to a conference in Birmingham in July this year to review the results. This was attended by representatives from the industry including the BVA parasitologists, key charities and gave us the opportunity to develop a consensus statement from the meeting delegates calling for effective tick control before travel, during travel and when pets come back into the UK. We want to utilise the data gathered by the Big Tick Project to educate vets, pet owners and for ongoing discussion within Government and the industry. We will work without regulation with the veterinary industry to encourage vets to work with pet owners to put in control measures with tick protection but fundamentally regulations need to come back in. We did not have Babesiosis Canis before this year and it is likely it came in from Europe. Illegal puppy importation and rescuing dogs from other countries also increases the risk of disease hugely.

Angela Smith MP - I wish we had longer to discuss this issue as it is hugely worrying and I think we need a whole session on the Pet Travel Scheme. There are very worrying trends here.

Lord Trees – People should think carefully about taking their dog abroad as there is a welfare issue when it is exposing it to potential fatal disease. We need to try to dissuade people from bringing in rescue dogs from the Mediterranean area as those dogs are likely to carry endemic infections or to be carriers. It is difficult to sterile cure the infections which they carry and they can then potentially be a source of infection in the UK. Potentially there is always a chance of introducing a Trojan dog into the UK which could establish a new disease.

Baroness Masham – There has been a Lyme Disease upsurge and I know various people who are suffering and little proper treatment in the UK. Can dogs get Lyme Disease or can they be carriers?

Hannah Newbury– Yes they can. We do have human health representation at our meeting and we are being invited to the human conferences on this so there is increasingly a one health approach to tick-borne disease. Potentially dogs can be carriers but we know little about it in dogs as the science is vague. One message from consensus statement is vets can be first line of education to pet owners about their health too and that is what we have been doing a lot of work on. A pet is attached to a human so it is about protecting ourselves as well.

Lorraine Platt (CAWF) Is there anything we can do to protect our dogs from ticks. I live near Hampton Court and I walk in Bushey Park where there are many signs about being tick aware. Should we avoid areas?

Hannah Newbury– There are control methods to put in place but if you stop an activity running in long grass it may be a welfare issue. There are effective tick treatments from vets and it is about being vigilant. It is now a year round problem now as winters are not so cold so be aware all seasons. Ticks take a little while to start feeding so when you have been walking examine your dog straight afterwards or brush them down as well as tick control.

Anne McBride (ABTC) – How can the advice get out to the public as most people only go the vet once a year? Can we use dog press, media and relate it to, Lyme Disease and children. Dogs travel for various shows as well so what are the rules in the show areas, it may be worth talking to the Kennel Club and others involved in those shows.

Amanda Melvin– It should be looked at all shows and it is a good idea to send a message out there. Breeders can then tell other people too.

Elizabeth Peplow – The media has taken a long time to understand Lyme Disease and thanks to human health campaigners the disease is now being discussed more widely. Over the last couple of years the risk to pets from tick-borne disease has become increasingly accepted and understood too. Chris Packham was involved in the Big Tick Project campaign and he has helped significantly in promoting the message.

Amanda Melvin - Next year we are doing a Travelling Tick Campaign to educate pet owners and will be using the support of vet practices to support that. We will continue to work with the vet industry to change the Pet Travel Scheme.

## 2) **AOB:** Other dog or cat welfare issues to be raised

Aileen Ward Greyt Exploitations – Will any of the political representatives able to attend a meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December on the EFRA report on Greyhound welfare?

Angela Smith MP – Yes there is a debate in Westminster Hall on the EFRA Greyhound Welfare report on the Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December which members of the public can attend. As a member of a committee I would have attended but I am in hospital that day. Nonetheless, I am sure we can circulate the details and it will be well attended.