

# MINUTES



## The Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare

An all party group for members of both houses at Westminster formed to promote and further the cause of animal welfare by all means available to the Parliaments at Westminster and in Europe

### DOG WELFARE

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 1700hrs – 1900hrs**

**Committee Room 12**

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Political Members: Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Rob Flello MP, Neil Parish MP, Roger Gale MP, Baroness Masham, Hannah Jordan for Lord Trees

Associate Members: Linda Rimington (RSPCA), Heidi Anderson (Chance Pixies), David Anderson (Chance Pixies), Katie Rook (Vet), David Cavill (Animal Care College), Lord McNair (ECMA), Linda Cantle (Wood Green), Wendy Kruger (Wood Green), Jaqi Bunn (NMA), Duncan Gibson (GBGB), John Gorzynsk (Royal Veterinary College), Albane Fauron (Royal Veterinary College), Carol Fowler (Cavalier Campaign), Jule Harris (Maitland), Stephen Charlton (Cockapoo Club), Lorraine Platt (Blue Fox), Arnot Wilson (Dog Union), Rochard Jordan (Dog Theft Awareness), Sam Gaines (RSPCA), Violet Ownens (RSPCA), Lenny Rolles (RSPCA), Gillian Notton (Mayhew Animal Home), Russell Whiting (ADI), Chris Dugmore (Mars Petcare), Ian Pendlington (LACS), Sharon Ife, Serena Cowdry (Journalist), Mark Abraham (PupAid), Tina Hay (Wheldon Law), Richard Holloway (GTA), Will Little (BVA), Sally Everitt (BSAVA), Sally Burnell (BVA), Robin Hargreaves (BVA), Margaret Donnellan (Dogs Trust), Paula Boyden (Dogs Trust), Laura Vallance (Dogs Trust), Clarissa Baldwin (Greyhound Forum), Peter Laurie (Retried Greyhound Trust), Chris Laurence (BVA AWF), Nik Oakley (Dog Lost), Debbie Matthews (SAMPAs), Briony Billingham (Cats Protection), Jacqui Cuff (Cats Protection), Fiona Wright, Joe Duckworth (LACS), Christine Dorchek (Grey2K), Fiona Cooke (Aberdeen University), David Grimsell (Cariad), Mike Radford (Aberdeen University), Sheile Crispin (Bristol University), Ben Myring (Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons), Ben Sundell (Battersea Dogs & Cats Home), Michael Webb (Battersea Dogs & Cats Home), Vicki Craighill (PDSA), Ros Leeminh (IFAW), Spencer Jomes (PetPlan), Neil Smith (RCVS Vice-President), Neil Ewart (Dog Theft Action), Lady Tabor (Dog Theft Action), Becky Thaites (Blue Cross), Denisa Delic (The Kennel Club), Dan O'Neil (Vet Compass RVC), Lucinda Reas (Greyhound Compassion), A Ward (Greyt Exploitations), T Baker (Greyt Exploitations), Julie Sanders (Four Paws), Keirann Harkin (Four Paws),

#### 1) Introduction

Welcome to our last meeting of 2014 which will be focussing on dog welfare. The Dog Strategy has been launched today and is available on the APGAW website. It is a great document and the first to bring together all the issues relating to dogs with the agreement of all the key stakeholders. I would like to thank Angela Smith MP who started off chairing the group and then Rob Flello MP who took over. I would also like to thank the individuals who represented the key organisations and in particular Marisa who is the author of the report.

#### 2) The Dog Strategy

Marisa Heath – I just want to reiterate that this is an on-going process and that we have asked members for their views. Where they have suggested areas we have not covered I have included them in the Appendix of the report and we can therefore pursue them at the next stage. We are open to input and views from all members

**Marisa Heath, Secretariat**

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Rob Ffello MP – I would like to thank the organisations who worked to produce this fantastic document bringing together so many issues into one place and covering a wide spectrum. This needs to be a working document and one which we need to batter the doors of DEFRA with in terms of what needs to change. I hope everyone is able to get behind this document so that whomever forms the next Government cannot ignore the strategy and the recommendations within it. This is a lever document and it is positive news for dog welfare and changes that are so long overdue.

Neil Parish MP – We needed to bring together the dog world and get them to agree which is an accomplishment in itself and the strategy is the first step in doing this. We will send it to Lord de Mauley and feed into Defra.

Steve Goody (Blue Cross) Can Rob give us a flavour as to how much cross party support there is for the strategy going forward?

Rob Ffello MP– We worked on it cross-party and there are MPs on both sides who feel very strongly that these recommendations need to be enacted. It is important to see it taken as manifesto commitments. All parties need to sign up and I believe there are members cross-party who will want to do so.

Neil Parish MP– The most controversial issue mentioned in the strategy is dog licensing but everything else makes sense and would be good for dog welfare and our society. A lot of it is about education and making the public aware of how to interact with dogs which we can all agree needs to be done regardless of political party.

Mike Radford (Aberdeen University) – It is an excellent document. The real advantage is it tackles public policy relating to dogs as a whole as opposed to the ad hoc tradition. Of course, the devil is in the detail and getting government a thought through strategy of how to implement it.

Robin Hargreaves (BVA) - We have not had much success getting animal welfare into curriculum but there is a broad case for getting it onto there. Do you feel there is any appetite for that considering the emphasis on education in the strategy?

Neil Parish MP – We have tried and will try again. I have spoken to Oliver Letwin who does cross department policy work about it. The problem is that animal welfare falls within DEFRA and then the Education department takes on board the issues of education but does not always see the benefit of animal welfare education.

David Cavill (Animal Care College) I have been involved in animal care education for nearly 40 years and I am behind a lot of this report. I want to endorse the points made about education and focus on dog training. In 2008 the Companion Animal Welfare Council produced a report describing the world of dog training as chaotic and it is not much better now than it was then. The importance of socialisation is essential and whatever you do with this strategy will not have any effect unless basic education is addressed. Future reports should give more emphasis on the education of the public and those involved in dog training. You did not need a degree to do basic training so walls should not be built around organisations. The next stage of the report should focus on that area.

Carol Fowler (Cavalier Campaign) Stage 2 of the report was mentioned and I am curious as to what will be the process now?

Rob Ffello MP – In terms of stage two we need to get this adopted as stage one first. Stage two is to work with whoever forms the next Government to get them to implement the recommendations. We will also look at expanding on the comments at the back of the report.

Stephen Charlton (Cockapoo Club of GB) – Would it be possible to extend the microchipping rules that are to come into force so that the actual Breeder's details were also held on each microchip records along with that of any owner?

Neil Parish MP – I have actually written to Defra about this and I agree it makes sense to have the breeder's details on the micro-chip. We need to push for this.

### **3) Existing Legislation and Enforcement**

**Dr Fiona Cooke Aberdeen University**

I did my PhD at Aberdeen University focussing on animal welfare legislation and the enforcement of that legislation at local authority level. As part of my research a survey was sent to all local authorities across Great Britain, with over a 90% response rate. What we wanted to look at was how practical enforcement was happening in local authorities. We looked at licensing first and what we found highlighted some of the issues in local authorities with their ability to enforce and implement animal welfare legislation. I looked at breeding establishments and pet shops in terms of licensing and also the Animal Welfare Act and the interesting factor was the inconsistency and issues that arose from that.

With licencing legislation there are often over 20 departments that can be responsible for dog licensing. We found pest control, health and safety, environmental protection and others were implementing animal welfare legislation. The discretionary nature of animal welfare legislation led to inconsistency in how it was enforced. The thing about the animal welfare officers is they may do the job but they do not get allocated the time to do it so they attach it onto another job and actually less than 11% of appointed local authority officers work in animal welfare on a daily basis. There is a lack of enforcement time so just because they have an animal welfare officer does not mean they use it.

Funding reductions have made a huge difference as when I started my research 4 years ago I met lots of officers involved in the field but as I went on there were fewer and fewer still there. That expertise is being lost and they had built up knowledge which has gone. Now 40% of LA pass their companion animal welfare reports to the RSPCA. The RSPCA takes on a lot of those cases but this affects the development of expertise in local authorities as they are not gaining the experience and developing skills.

### **Mark Berry National Companion Animal Welfare Forum**

I work at Stockton on Tees Borough Council as a Principal Environmental Health Officer and I chair the National Companion Animal Forum originally set up by LACORS in 2004 to pull together local authority expertise to advise DEFRA on the forthcoming Animal Welfare Act. It comprised mainly local authority officers from across the country with the purpose to promote good practice / consistency and advise with regards enforcement particularly with regards to the then proposed plethora of secondary legislation which still has not come to fruition .

When LACORS was absorbed by the LGA secretariat support was withdrawn so the group is now self-run by the members and we meet twice a year. With cutbacks we have seen members of our group unable to attend as their authority will not release them or cover the costs or simply they have new job roles or have moved on.

The Dog Strategy has some excellent recommendations within it and it touches on enforcement a lot. If you expect local authorities to become more proactive in there enforcement the only way that will happen is through radical changes and making things a statutory duty. Technically my animal welfare team only have to provide a stray dog service and license animal establishments. All of the other work we undertake within the service is discretionary and thus is an easy option to cut when savings are having to be made by Heads of Service.

To put it into context within an Environmental Health department, the food team undertake food inspections of commercial premises and this is monitored and overseen by the Food Standards Agency who have various powers to intervene if they feel inspections are not being carried out appropriately. There is no overriding government department that takes this role in relation to companion animal welfare, not even currently monitoring stray dog numbers /trends or service provision. No-one takes a LA to task if they cease to provide an out of hour's stray dog service, other than possibly the local community

This report is looking to put in place some good building bricks but the foundations need to be resolved at an enforcement level. Better use of existing resources via joined up working with police and other bodies is needed if the proposed new legislation that is on its way is to be at all effective. The new micro-chipping regulations that come into force in April 2016 may have little impact as the vast majority of local authorities have no resource to enforce them and DEFRA have stated for LA's to give them a light touch approach. We will still have those who do not update their details, or who do not micro-chip. Without proactive enforcement will this change. The same goes with the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act which is potentially a useful tool to help us be more proactive in dealing with nuisance dogs but we need the time and resource to tackle those dog owners and more joined up working. The Wooler report has asked some serious questions about how Central Government sees legislation around companion animals being enforced. With farm animals we have a much clearer statutory role than we do with companion animals and that needs to be looked at.

Neil Parish MP – We have mentioned the resource point in the strategy and are aware we need to find the funds to enable a more proactive approach.

### **Ian McParland - Good Dog Partnership**

I am mainly dealing with the beginning of recommendation 20 of the report. The Good Dog Partnership has been put together by me and Tina Hay from two sides of the fence. Tina is the principal of Wheldon Law and does all the defence work on dog attack cases. I was head of the status dog unit in the Met Police so carried out thousands of prosecutions. We have come to the conclusion that the solution to preventing dog attacks is early intervention. In 2012 there were 1300 prosecutions under Section 3 under the Dangerous Dogs Act and then you add fouling, barking, fighting and other anti-social activities and you will see there is a lot to tackle. There are huge benefits to responsibly owned dogs in the community and there are now some limited powers to work proactively to create this. The Anti-social Behaviour and Crime Act gives the option of serving Community Protection Notices for which Defra has issued guidance. You can order someone to have their dog muzzled and you can order someone to undertake training but this training looks at training one dog at a time. Aggression is complex and often arises from the poor management or welfare of the dog rather than a dog itself that is aggressive. The wrong training using aversive methods deepens the problem so we believe you need to train the owner. In an approach similar to a Driver Awareness Course, we aim to arm owners with the skills to train and manage their dog. Before there is an attack we help owners understand their dogs and obligations. Dogs are too disposable and owners pass them on so we need to train the owner and this can work alongside local authority enforcement so that welfare standards can be met and public safety is ensured.

### **Questions:**

Chris Newman (REPTA) – I spend half my working week dealing with local authorities and licensing and there are some good and some bad and some indifferent. There is no training available to these inspectors. What would the group think about whether we should remove licensing from local authorities and take it back to central Government?

Mark Berry – I would not argue with you in terms of the plethora of different standards out there. There is very little training and the vast majority of licensing officers spend 90% of their time licensing taxis. In terms of central government, regionalisation has been talked about but never happened and so I am not sure anything would change quickly.

Fiona Cooke - Where we talk about licencing we need to make sure there is structured mechanism that engages with animal science and knowledge rather than a block of licensing which could come from it being central.

Tim Morris (AHWB) – Irrespective of the rights or wrong of moving to central government, it is actually the opposite of what is happening with farm animals and so is unlikely. Do you see any positive role for the process of primary authority to improve consistency and give clear standards?

Mark Berry – For those not aware of the primary authority concept primary it works for with national businesses that have premises located in different local authority areas e.g. ASDA it works as a statutory partnership with a single local authority usually where the head office of the company is based, which then provides robust and reliable advice for other councils to take into account when carrying out inspections or dealing with non-compliance. This promotes a consistent approach and rules out differing standards being asked for. The concept could work with animal licensing but there are only a small number of national organisations like Pets at Home where this may be applicable but in a lot of cases we are mainly dealing with individuals and small sole traders.

Mike Radford (Aberdeen University) – It would be a huge leap of faith to suggest that Defra could do licensing better than local authorities. One of the problems is that the system of local government does not guarantee that this work is done consistently. Where local authorities are acting effectively it comes down to the enthusiasm of one or two people like Mark who make it work so well. So it is the individuals rather than the system driving it. The Wooler report criticizes Defra as they own animal welfare legislation but they abdicate responsibility. There needs to be a system of accountability from local authorities to someone central such as Defra. Fiona and I had a meeting with Defra where we were told that it was never the intention that local authorities should enforce the animal welfare act so who is meant to be doing it? There is an important constitutional issue in that parliament is passing legislation with the intention that it be enforced and yet it is not happening.

Neil Parish MP - We do need to look at enforcement as it is not being done and you make a good point. Additionally even if we step up the funding it would need to be ring-fenced.

David Grimsell (Cariad) – The strategy asks to change the legislation which will take time and for quicker changes the local authorities can play a key role. There is an issue about how local authorities respond to third sector and many become very defensive. The third sector can have an input into their work.

Fiona Wright – It seems to be that the matter of lack of money and expertise if every dog owner paid a small fee for that dog it would provide revenue. Could people be made to do the Good Dog Partnership course to get the licence?

Ian McParland – There are some European countries where you have to undertake a training course so the model is out there. However we are decades away from that in this country.

#### **4) Greyhound Welfare**

##### **Clarissa Baldwin – The Greyhound Forum**

The Greyhound Forum started 20 years ago with all the main charities represented on the there. All of us found that our rehoming centres were full of greyhounds, nearly half the spaces taken up by these dogs. Now we talk to the industry twice a year formally and yes we have had some successes but they are small. We have been quite patient with the industry over this issue. The regulations came in on the back of some high profile media coverage over greyhounds being put down unnecessarily. These are main provisions of the regulations which only cover the dogs at the tracks and does not cover them where they spend most of their time, in the kennels.

##### **Peter Laurie - Retired Greyhound Trust**

Most people would agree that the industry is in a state of decline but it is slower than we thought. There are 25 tracks licensed in Britain and licensed under the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) and then there are 10 independent tracks. There has been a decline in number of greyhound entering and leaving the sport. According to Deloitte, 800 licensed trainers have contributed £3million more than they took out in the last year, so they are under real financial pressure – that cannot be good for their or their dogs' welfare.. Within GBGB racing the requirements of the regulations have been implemented and enforced so the Board have done what it was required to do by law. All greyhounds are micro-chipped, a vet is present at the tracks and those vets are legally obliged to record details of injury at the tracks. However, there is little information about the impact of the regulations at the independent tracks. There is also still a lot more to do. The issue is where greyhounds go when they finish racing. 60% of the greyhounds entering our care need veterinary work, including sometimes to fix racing injuries. There are more greyhounds leaving the sport than the charities are able to rehome. How is the data collected at the tracks being used to prevent injury?

Clarissa Baldwin – There was a report commissioned by APGAW on greyhounds and also by Lord Donohue. There were 37 recommendations of which half were implemented and we have asked when the other half will receive consideration. We would like to have seen a Select Committee look into this. Transparency is the big thing and with 8000 greyhounds leaving the industry every year we want to know where they are going, are they put to sleep, sent abroad. Also what is the Injury data showing and what remedial action is taken as part of the prevention work? The standard have to be high and not set just by industry. 70% of greyhounds come from Ireland and we would like to see regular inspection of transportation and local authorities having properly trained people looking at the kennels and tracks on the independent side which may be a small proportion of the industry but nonetheless still needs to be monitored.

##### **Joe Duckworth - League Against Cruel Sports**

There is a lot of consensus amongst us about what needs to be done. We have published our report jointly with Grey2K USA who have a great deal of experience of the issue in the states.

##### **Christina Dorchak - Grey2K USA**

I am so honoured to be here. This is not an industry only in the UK as it started in the U.S so I feel special responsibility for the cruelty in this sport which has extended across to other countries. Greyhound racing is being prohibited across the U.S in 43 states which have either blocked or banned their dog tracks leaving only 7 states with legal tracks. The

trend in the US is to prohibit dog racing. We wanted to address this issue in the UK and hope you will do what we have done. We want to see greater transparency. The reason Americans rejected dog racing is because we opened the information up so the public could see the injuries and the problems the greyhounds face. They are breaking their backs and their legs, they are being electrocuted and it is not acceptable. In 2009 the Philippines rejected dog racing and so did Jamaica and South Africa as well. The key reason for this was the great concern over the number of dogs which would be bred and then flood out to rescue centres adding to overpopulation. The only country which has gone the other way is Vietnam. Your neighbour Ireland has decided to double the activity and increased its subsidy to 12 million euros to get this dying industry back on its feet. This group made a recommendation for transparency and for the dogs to be monitored and welfare checked yet the industry has not done this. The group should have all existing tracks under Independent Regulation and much greater transparency

Joe Duckworth (The League Against Cruel Sports) – We are not calling for the banning of greyhound racing. In 2006 it was disclosed there were 10,000 healthy dogs killed and buried in gardens. There are issues around breeding, transportation from Ireland, injuries and that all led to this group making recommendations in 2007 which if they had been implemented we would not be in this situation now. Self-regulation by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain has shown they cannot deal with this and that they are shrouded in so much secrecy. Self-regulation does not work without transparency. We would like the recommendations of this group from 2007 to be implemented. The injury statistics go nowhere and are kept secret. The Statutory Instrument set in 2010 has to be reviewed in 2015. This can be done by a civil servant who asks for views and then sends a paper to the Minister. We do not think that is the right way to do it. We need an evidence-based review with statistics on injuries, greyhounds being rehomed, transported and so forth. I do not believe the GBGB will disclose this information and so MPs should do this through the EFRA Committee so the statistics can be properly analysed. Would it be possible for this committee to write to Lord de Mauley drawing his attention to the recommendations from 2007 and ask him not to do a quick and dirty review behind closed doors and to allow parliamentarians to have their say?

Neil Parish MP – I will put it to the Select Committee and we will write to Lord de Mauley.

Ros Lemming (IFAW) Whilst IFAW do not work on this issue, my partner is a senior executive at Betfair and I wonder what the betting industry can do to help?

Clarissa Baldwin - As I understand it Betfair has pulled the money they put into the levy and one would hope others would siphon this money to welfare organisations.

Joe Duckworth – The trainers have been starved and it is the bookies who make all the money. Sooner or later we will have the publication of the injuries and that will tarnish their brand so it is in their interests to make the industry more transparent.

Rick Holloway (Greyhound Trainers Association)– I have to agree with a lot of what has been said. We as trainers are shut out of the industry. I am not allowed a seat on the GBGB and we ask for injury statistics which we agree should be public but we do not get them. The Government body shuts out the key stakeholders of the industry. The Donoghue report has been cherry-picked and we the trainers are calling for an urgent review on the industry and the GBGB. It is not fit for purpose and is surrounded in secrecy. We want a good industry but we are being starved with trainers and staff below the minimum wage.

Rob Ffello MP – The industry itself is saying there is a problem with the industry and that is a powerful point.

Duncan Gibson (GBGB) I work for the Greyhound Board, the industry should be self-regulated. Welfare is a high priority and we are UKAS accredited.

Clarissa Baldwin –There have been some successes and we thank the industry for it. The industry does not know quite what welfare means. When we talk about the kennels we know the industry has put £1.3 million aside to bring them to up to standards but there are 800 trainers so you are not going to get much for each kennel out of that money. There is an awful long way to go and without transparency we cannot move forward,

Chris Laurence - This exposes the myth that UKAS is the answer to all standards, if the standard is rubbish and then the output is rubbish as well.

Joe Duckworth – Our report is an imperfect view and only partial because we do not have the statistics. I hope that GBGB proves me wrong as I would love to be proved wrong and the industry needs to do this.

## **5) Illegal Trade in Puppies**

Paula Boyden – The Pet Travel Scheme changed in 2012 and opened up loopholes for puppies coming into the UK. There has been an increase of 61% of dogs coming in under the Scheme and a similar increase in cats. The numbers from Lithuania have gone up by 780% and those from Hungary are up 663% so there really is a massive influx of animals coming in. We are told by Defra that there are 100% checks but that is of declared animals, not the undeclared ones. We focused on two countries in our undercover investigation and found the Pet Travel Scheme is being used to bring puppies into to sell them ignoring the Balloi Directive and with serious issues on welfare during transport. The individuals doing this are making big money. Puppies are entering the UK without the correct treatment for tapeworm or rabies. We have come across vets falsifying paperwork and passports. We know the controls at ports are totally ineffective. There is little or no sharing of information amongst the agencies. The lack of resource at local authority level is a problem in managing this situation. We filmed 15 breeders and dealers selling puppies and came across vets who were happy to falsify paperwork signing off puppies who were much younger than it stated. We found they were bringing in PitBulls and illegal breeds and we were able to purchase passports for fictitious puppies. Someone bringing in 5 puppies a week can be making in excess of £100,000 a year. One individual has bought 1000 puppies into the country alone.

Changes to the PETS scheme mean we have a new laminated passport and the introduction of non-discriminatory checks across Europe. The minimum 12 weeks for rabies vaccination will not make a massive difference. There are additional rules for travelling with more than 5 pets but again another loophole here in the movement for sporting purposes which allow someone travel with more than 5 dogs if they are going to an event or show.

We need to ban the import of puppies under 6 months of age entering the UK, improve the robustness of checks at port, improve cross agency working to develop an intelligence system and share data on illegal traded commercial consignments of animals. Creation of a centrally accessible database logging microchip numbers of pets entering the UK and introduction of fixed penalty charge for those caught illegally importing puppies into the UK would also improve the current situation.

Neil Parish MP - I think all the organisations here will support those measures and agree that this is a serious problem. I will speak to Lord de Mauley again about this issue as will other APGAW MPs.

## **6) AOB**

### **Nik Oakley - Dogs Lost PR**

We offer a free service run by volunteers. The scale of the problem we deal with is shown in the 1.5 million hits a month on our website because of the growing problem of dog theft. We have our website and a network of volunteers. We partner with Pet Log and are linked with Halo scanner. We have many challenges and the no compulsory scanning is a big one for us. You can never be sure your dog will be scanned. A lot has been said about dog wardens with half of the services little more than pest control officers and so this makes the job harder as the people picking up lost dogs have very little knowledge of them. Dog theft is the biggest issue and a third of the dogs we re-unit have been the result of some form of dog theft. Some of it has become organized crime and one of the big issues has been getting police to take dog theft seriously as they see them as goods and chattels. Owing to this dog theft figures only identify that the police force does not have a problem as it does not recognise them as sentient beings. We have worked a lot with police forces but it is still a huge problem. Dog theft is easy money as no one goes to prison for stealing a dog. We have sought out other organisations interested in this issue and we set up the Stolen and Missing Pets Alliance and we have a five point mission – compulsory scanning by highways authorities, network rail, local authorities, charities, prove of ownership through a micro-chip, reclassification of dog theft so no longer goods and chattels and stronger and tougher pet theft legislation. We have made a submission to the sentencing council supported by Neil Parish and hope that we will continue to have the support of APGAW.

Neil Parish – We will have a go again the Home Office on the sentencing issue as you know I have been very supportive of this.

**END**

