

Advisory Council on Companion Animal Welfare

Date: 15th December 2022

Venue: Backweston campus

Meeting Time: 14:30 – 16.30

Attendee's:

Seán O'Laoide (Chair), Eoin Ryan (DAFM), Sean Murray (DAFM), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Alan Walsh (DAFM), Aiden Maguire (DAFM), Rory Breathnach (UCD), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Una O'Toole (Irish Blue Cross), Sarah Lynch (Dogs Trust), Alan Rossiter (Veterinary Ireland), Claire Owens (DSPCA) Jim Stephens (IKC), Claire Meade (The Cat Hospital).

1. Minutes and Action points from previous meeting

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed.

2. Brachycephalics

The development of a strategy is currently underway with ongoing work to identify and achieve objectives. The group received an update from the Irish Kennel Club (IKC) on the breeders schedule project. IKC are also taking feedback on their tiered testing programme for breeders and in 2023 will explore temperament testing for IKC dogs, ahead of awarding championship status.

A central database for DBEs and potentially other breeders was discussed.

Development of an ACCAW website was raised as a central resource to distribute information.

Action Point:

Dogs Trust to explore approach to messaging for owners and between the various charities

3. Responsible Pet Ownership - Messaging

DAFM discussed a number of action points from previous meeting.

The topic of engaging with the education system was discussed along with the need to develop consistent messaging for use in school visits.

The requirement to undergo a mandatory training course before being allowed to own a dog was raised. It was suggested that introducing such a requirement could be backed up with legislation. However, it was noted there needs to be a balance to ensure that owning a dog is not made unduly difficult.

The Chair suggested that the Council develop recommendations in the next 3 – 6 months on responsible pet ownership.

It was suggested that metrics be built into ACCAW website to monitor effectiveness.

Action Point: IKC to share presentation from MSD on biosecurity with group.

4. Update on Animal Welfare Grants

DAFM addressed the meeting advising that Minister McConalogue made an announcement on Animal Welfare day, 8th December, awarding €5.8 million in grants to animal welfare charities. 2022 was the most data-driven year of the grants process to date. €900,000 was awarded to organisations on the basis of education and knowledge sharing initiatives, incorporating responsible pet ownership, with the updated knowledge-sharing section of the application form noted. €700,000 was dedicated to organisations based on throughput, neutering and rehoming facilities.

DAFM has awarded UCD research funding for a project to evaluate the outcome of the animal welfare grants process.

Action Point: DAFM to follow up on getting a question included into the census to estimate the population of dogs and cats in the country.

Action Point: DAFM to circulate list of charities, who received grants, to the ACCAW group.

5. DAFM Cross-Departmental Group on Dogs

DAFM informed the meeting that An Taoiseach has requested that Minister McConalogue lead an inter-departmental group on dogs, to provide coherence in this area among the relevant departments. Upcoming meetings will focus on relevance of dog legislation, updating where possible and priority areas going forward. The ACCAW can input into this process to achieve positive outcomes.

Action Point: IKC to send information on canine brucellosis to DAFM.

Action Point: DAFM to share SI 130/2016 , the Notification and Control of Diseases Affecting Terrestrial Animals Regulations, with ACCAW group.

6. AOB

2023 will see four big legislative initiatives by the EU Welfare Platform, one of which will concern protection of kept animals, including companion animals.

The policy for euthanasia of animals in pain was raised, including the issue of junior vets experiencing difficulties in such situations.

Action Point: Short guidance to be provided by DAFM on legal basis relating to euthanasia policy for animals in extremis.

7. Date of next meeting

31st March 2023, 14:00.