

Advisory Council on Companion Animal Welfare: Meeting Minutes

Date: 4th December 2023

Venue: Backweston campus

Meeting Time: 14:00 – 16:00

Attendees:

Seán O’Laoide (Chair), Eoin Ryan (DAFM), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Alan Walsh (DAFM), Chris Conneely (Irish Blue Cross), Suzie Carley (Dogs Trust), Jim Stephens (IKC), Maureen Byrne (APDT), Conor Dowling (ISPCA), Hana Scanlan (DAFM), Sean Murray (DAFM), Alan Rossiter (Veterinary Ireland).

Online: Jim Stephens (IKC), Claire Meade (The Cat Hospital), Claire Owens (DSPCA).

Apologies: Paul Lawless (IKC), Rory Breathnach (UCD), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Pat Watt (DSPCA).

1. Minutes and Action points from previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

The action points of previous meeting were reviewed.

2. Brachycephalic Group update

It was noted that the brachycephalic media campaign has been well received since its launch.

The brachycephalic group plan to launch a communications plan for 2024, with monthly updates. They have received permission to use the FECAVA leaflet and are seeking permission to use a Swedish brachycephalic video as part of this campaign.

The meeting was informed that the research project focusing on large-scale non-Irish Kennel Club breeders has not received funding and will not proceed. However, the group have made contact with large-scale breeders from Northern Ireland, who although are willing to share information on their practice and processes.

3. Artificial Insemination

There was general consensus among ACCAW members on agreement with the FECAVA statement, circulated prior to the meeting. However, group noted potential objections from the greyhound racing industry. The group agreed that its advice to the Minister is that canine surgical artificial insemination ought to be banned in Ireland.

Action Point: DAFM to consider the advice of the ACCAW on this issue.

4. Electrical shock collar for dogs

The Group discussed the subject and considered the submissions circulated to in advance of the meeting by the Dogs Trust, IKC and IADT.

The group agreed that its advice to the Minister is that remotely controlled electronic shock collars for dogs and cats ought to be banned in Ireland. The group is to further consider the issue of anti-barking and citronella collars. The group is not making a recommendation to ban collars linked to boundary fencing.

Action Point: Dogs Trust to contact EU Dog and Cat alliance for opinion on electrical shock collars.

5. Exotic animal sub-group

ACCAW agreed to establish an exotic animal sub-group and consider an exotic animal ownership campaign.

Action Point: Establish exotic animal sub-group with ACCAW member Conor Dowling (ISPCA) as Chairperson.

6. Responsible cat ownership campaign

Work is continuing on producing a user-friendly leaflet on responsible cat ownership, which will target owners and vet practices.

Consideration to be given on developing a public message, focusing on the importance of cat neutering, to also target farmers who may have cats/cat colonies.

7. Website update

DAFM presented a prototype version of the ACCAW website for input.

Action Point: Acquire ACCAW.ie, if possible.

Action Point: Add ACCAW email address to site.

Action Point: Explore potential SEO management with Government website hosting.

8. AOB

Dogs Trust noted that the numbers of relinquished dogs are high. The issue of vet fees in relation to the surrender of dogs was raised.

The IKC annual conference will be held on 4th February.

The potential impact of new UK legislation on XL bullies on the importation of such dogs into Ireland was discussed.

The ethical challenges faced by vets asked to euthanise healthy dogs was discussed in the context of dangerous dogs.

The group was informed that DAFM officials are to appear at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine hearing on the impact of veterinary fees on dog surrenders.

Action Point: ACCAW members agree to share data and reasons in relation to dog breeds being relinquished.

Action Point: Dogs Trust to share their submission to the Veterinary Council of Ireland on canine artificial insemination with group.

Action Point: ACCAW is to prepare a question for the Veterinary Council of Ireland, asking it to consider developing a decision tree for the ethical dilemma on the euthanasia of apparently healthy dogs, with particular focus on dangerous dogs.

Next Meeting: 4th March 2024, 14:00.