

## **Advisory Council on Companion Animal Welfare**

**Date:** 26th June 2023

**Venue:** Backweston campus

**Meeting Time:** 14:00 – 16.00

### **Attendee's:**

Seán O'Laoide (Chair), Eoin Ryan (DAFM), Sean Murray (DAFM), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Alan Walsh (DAFM), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Chris Conneely (Irish Blue Cross), Paul Halpin (Irish Blue Cross), Suzie Carley (Dogs Trust), Claire Owens (DSPCA) Jim Stephens (IKC), Maureen Byrne (APDT). Conor Dowling (ISPCA), Hana Scanlon (DAFM), Caitlin King (DAFM).

Apologies: Claire Meade (The Cat Hospital), Alan Rossiter (Veterinary Ireland), Paul Lawless (IKC).

### **1. Minutes and Action points from previous meeting**

The minutes of previous meeting were agreed.

The action points of previous meeting were reviewed.

### **2. Update from EuroFawc conference**

A presentation on the recent EuroFAWC meeting in the Netherlands was provided by Siobhan Mullan, who will circulate notes on same to group.

A proposal was put to the group to look at the possibility of conducting a survey to gauge public opinion on animal welfare. ACCAW agreed to explore the possibility of conducting a survey but would need more detail.

In the context of EuroFAWC discussions on exotics, the group were informed that the Inter-departmental Group on Exotic Animals is progressing, with a further meeting with NPWS planned for early July.

**Action:** Siobhan Mullan to draft and circulate a note in advance of the next meeting on what might be involved in a survey of public opinion on animal welfare in Ireland and the potential benefits of such a survey.

**Action:** Siobhan Mullan to circulate EuroFAWC conference notes to group.

### **3. Brachycephalic WG: next steps to progress the recommendations**

The Group discussed Dutch and Norwegian initiatives in relation to brachycephalic breeds.

Potential options to highlight brachycephalic breeds in a responsible pet ownership campaign were explored, with website and hard copy distribution methods considered.

Veterinary Ireland had previously undertaken a media campaign which could be used as a template.

**Action:** ACCAW and DAFM to decide recipient list and DAFM to circulate letter to recipients, to include pet advertisers, on behalf of the Brachycephalic Group.

**Action:** ACCAW to coordinate brachycephalic publicity campaign, including poster design.

### **4. Update on Control of Dogs Working Group**

In relation to the report of the Control of Dogs Working Group, DAFM advised the meeting that the recommendations of the Working Group will require multiple actions, including a responsible dog ownership campaign in conjunction with DRCD. DAFM will continue work on revising microchip legislation and reviewing the Animal Health and Welfare Act to give more powers to enforcement officers in relation to seizing and disposing of dogs.

DAFM added that charities receiving funding from DAFM will now need to submit to DAFM a written procedure in how they manage aggressive dogs. DAFM advised the meeting of a further recommendation in relation to restricted breeds with the age limit for licensed ownership to be raised from 16 to 18 years of age.

DAFM are exploring the feasibility of developing a centralised microchipping database with search functionality to access the information currently contained on the four authorised databases. It was highlighted to the meeting difficulties encountered by enforcement officers when dogs are seized and owner surrenders dog, but later refuses to give consent to change of ownership on the microchip database.

The Group discussed the current status of dog rehoming, noting that with larger breeds there were higher numbers of surrendered animals. Further issues highlighted included the impact of breed type on rehoming and increased numbers of surrendered pregnant females and litter, due to decreased market demand for puppies.

DAFM brought to the attention of the meeting a recommendation of the report to introduce a legislative ban on surgical artificial insemination in dogs. The group noted and welcomed this recommendation, expressing its support.

## **5. Responsible dog ownership campaign: progress and next steps**

DAFM are currently working with DRCD on a dog ownership campaign. DAFM are awaiting final clearance from DRCD on content and will circulate to ACCAW when finalised.

**Action:** DAFM to circulate details of responsible dog ownership campaign when finalised.

## **6. Electrical shock collars for dogs: Should the group consider this?**

The Group received an update on regulations due to be enforced in England and Wales from February 2024 and noted a UCD project on livestock and invisible fencing using electric collars. It was clarified that the ban in England and Wales applied to electric shock collars operated by a hand-held remote control, rather than those used for electric fencing.

The Group agreed to consider the topic of electric shock collars for dogs operated by hand-held remote control devices and to make an evidence-based recommendation on this subject.

**Action:** Dogs Trust to begin work on evidence-based submission to inform recommendation, which will then be shared with the group.

## **7. Update on planned legislation on ear cropping of dogs**

Work on the ear cropping of dogs SI is progressing. The SI is currently with the EU Commission for observations. DAFM officials hope to have the SI signed by August, although it was noted that due the summer period final signing may be later in the summer.

## **8. AOB**

Next Meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023, 14:00.