

Advisory Council on Companion Animal Welfare

Date: 6th June 2024

Venue: Backweston campus

Meeting Time: 14:00 – 16:00

Attendee's:

Seán O'Laoide (Chair), Mairead Conney (DAFM), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Hana Scanlan (DAFM), Aiden Maguire (DAFM), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Suzie Carley (Dogs Trust), Maureen Byrne (APDT). Conor Dowling (ISPCA), Jim Stephens (IKC), Paul Lawless (IKC).

Online: Claire Meade (The Cat Hospital), Cyril Sullivan (ISPCA), Chris Conneely (Irish Blue Cross), Alan Rossiter (Veterinary Ireland).

Apologies: Alan Walsh (DAFM), Mary McCarthy (DAFM), Pat Watt (DSPCA).

1. Minutes and Action points from previous meeting

It was agreed to amend the following text in the March ACCAW Minutes.

Conor Dowling - Regarding text in Point 5 Update on Exotics Sub-Group

To clarify the part below, it was somebody from the UK based company tasked to conduct zoo inspections that was not in favour of the positive list, rather than zoos generally, unsure where the zoos themselves stand on this.

*Within the EU there seems to be traction towards the Positive List, with ACCAW considering narrowing the scope of the group and using the Positive List, however, **zoos are not in favour of the Positive List.***

Chris Conneely - Regarding text in Point 8 Reasons for Surrender of Dogs

Apology, but could you please organise an amendment to the March ACCAW Minutes because the following sentence was incorrect:

On page 4, there is a line "Blue Cross have started a waiting list to review numbers, regarding surrender dogs".

The correct wording would be "**The Irish Blue** Cross has started a waiting list to review numbers, regarding **dogs requiring veterinary services at the Charity**".

The action points of previous meeting were reviewed.

2. Report from EuroFAWC

The Chair attended the meeting of EuroFAWC in Edinburgh on the 15-16th of May 2024. These are the European ACCAW's which have been ongoing since 2006. The main objective was to share knowledge and experience. The purpose of the meeting is not to develop policy but rather put forward voluntary initiatives. Delegates may also attend the European platform of animal welfare. EuroFAWC has many councils on animal welfare including, Farm Animal, Companion and Scientific.

The agenda focused on Animal Welfare and the Environment, and the Extreme Breeding of Dogs. The Chair gave an update from all the countries who attended the EuroFAWC meeting regarding these topics and ACCAW members discussed the findings the Chair brought up.

Action Point: The Chair will circulate the presentation once he receives it.

Action Point: Flowchart of who to contact for all animal welfare concerns. It was proposed to contact DAFM's dedicated AW Helpline for assistance.

3. Legislation update

DAFM – Working with other EU member states on the proposed regulations on the welfare and identification of dogs and cats. This is focused on commercial breeding establishments, shelters, selling establishments, foster homes and imports. The elements mentioned being covered is housing, enrichment, breeding, microchipping and advertising online sales. The driving force behind this legislation is the illegal trade of animals throughout Europe. Third country imports that come in commercially within the EU will have to have similar standards that the EU are proposing to bring in. It's expected there will be a 3-to-8-year lead in time for this.

Electric shock collar – In relation to National Legislation, the Minister has announced he will be introducing an S.I and working on an S.I for microchipping.

Surgical Insemination – Looking at doing a public consultation and introducing legislation on it.

AHW Act 2013 – Gone to Heads of Bills Stage. This will assist the ISPCA/DSPCA in terms of animals that are seized in the course of action.

Ear Cropping – DAFM came across two cases where practices weren't up to standard so raised a "Rapid Alert System on Food Safety" which is where an alert goes out to EU member states, to make EU member states aware of the issues. The newly introduced S.I has been welcomed across the board including Dogs Trust and the ISPCA who have noticed the benefits of this legislation.

Action Point: Dogs Trust and Catherine to discuss microchipping stray dogs.

Action Point: VCI on Artificial Insemination – Awaiting results of public consultation. Once received, Veterinary Ireland will report back on same, to ACCAW.

4. Artificial insemination in dogs

The Chair put forward a motion that only vets only should perform AI in dogs and all agreed with this. The next steps going forward were discussed including to establish if there is any justification or reasonable case for any AI in dogs. It was suggested AI could be an option if the breed is under threat of extinction or only be performed under certain conditions if there has been a successful natural mating of birth.

The members agreed to wait for the release of the VCI public consultation in relation to who should perform AI or not and the role of the fertility clinics if any. It was suggested the most appropriate way to control and regulate all AI is to bring it under the remit of the veterinary profession.

Action Point: VCI to circulate public consultation results once released.

5. Sub-Committees

The brachycephalic group are working on the innate health leaflets. They have the concept from the UK and are working with the design team here to modify the logo, photos and text. DAFM agreed to have ACCAW on the leaflets but disagreed with designing a logo unless the group want to design a stakeholders logo.

The group were in touch with a lawyer who is part of an ad hoc group and offered to support brachycephalic group or other topics in relation to regulatory issues within animal welfare. Also, another legal firm Fieldfisher met with DAFM and the Dail committee recently to discuss the Greyhound Act versus the DBE Act, strengths and weaknesses.

DAFM will in all likelihood oversee the design of the innate health leaflet, with the cat leaflet it will be sent out to tender as was done with the dog leaflet by DRCD. Both these leaflets will be available in hard copy and online. The Minister will be involved in the launch of both the innate health and cat leaflets.

Action Point: The brachycephalic group to circulate innate health leaflet/poster for the members to give their input on the final design.

6. AOB

IKC – Pet Expo in October 2024 which IKC more than likely will have a stand if ACCAW would like to make any relevant information available to distribute to the public. It was suggested that we should get our information out to similar events like Pups in the Park and Agri shows.

The Cat Hospital – Advised any member of ACCAW to contact them or the sub-committee with any issues regarding cats or to get their feline opinions across to the sub-committee.

Action Point: Claire will send an email to ACCAW members in relation to this.

UCD – Discussed looking for a vision from ACCAW and to come in line with the planned Autumn onwards survey. DAFM stated the ACCAW website is still being developed and updated at the moment. There is a draft statement on the website what ACCAW are about.

The Chair suggested looking at existing legislation and advising the Minister accordingly. To make sure there are no gaps between ACCAW and FAWAC.

Action Point: DAFM to circulate the draft statement on ACCAW website for input from members regarding the vision of ACCAW.

Action Point: Terms of Reference

Action Point: UCD to circulate a FOI data about Local Authorities dog shelters in Ireland and England.

UCD requested that one of ACCAW meetings to be an onsite or fieldtrip of interest to the group. If this were to go ahead ACCAW would have to look after the logistics and not DAFM. Dogs Trust kindly offered an onsite visit to their premises. Another one mentioned was UCD vet school.

Action Point: Dogs Trust to circulate Nature Watch Presentation to the members.

Action Point: Catherine to contact Dogs.ie regarding dachshunds.

DAFM emerging issues:

- Puppy Yoga – Big in the UK and has come across to Ireland recently.
- Dog Fighting –There are a group who operate in the UK, Ireland and France. There was a successful prosecution in the UK recently. ISPCA added that the RSPCA invested greatly in this case.
- Pet Abduction Act – Introduced in the UK. To be circulated.
- More control over cats in the UK. Ban on cat flaps, cats to wear collars and bells.

The UK have introduced the Rental Reform Bill so the landlord must consider the pet when renting out their property to renters.

Action Point: Sub-Groups to update the Chair during the summer.

Next Meeting: 09/09/2024 2-5pm

