

Advisory Council on Companion Animal Welfare

Date: 31st March 2023

Venue: Backweston campus

Meeting Time: 14:00 – 16.00

Attendee's:

Seán O'Laoide (Chair), Eoin Ryan (DAFM), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Alan Walsh (DAFM), Aiden Maguire (DAFM), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Chris Conneely (Irish Blue Cross), Sarah Lynch (Dogs Trust), Alan Rossiter (Veterinary Ireland), Jim Stephens (IKC), Claire Meade (The Cat Hospital), Maureen Byrne (APDT), Conor Dowling (ISPCA), Terry McElvaney (DAFM), Paul Lawless (IKC).

1. Minutes and Action points from previous meeting

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed.

Clarification was provided in relation to the meaning of the phrase “a veterinary practitioner acting as such” in section 23 (2) of the 2013 Animal Health and Welfare Act. This phrase means a veterinary practitioner acting in his or her capacity as a veterinary practitioner.

Action Point: Veterinary Ireland requested that this clarification of the phrase “veterinary practitioner acting as such” be notified to the Veterinary Council of Ireland by DAFM on behalf of ACCAW, for their information.

Action point: Dogs Trust to send DAFM information on a dog which had been intended for import into Ireland but which was found to be infected with B canis prior to travel.

2. Update on control of dogs working group

The report of the group has been approved by cabinet and published. Report contains recommendations covering short, medium and long-term actions, to be implemented by several Departments/state bodies. The group will continue to meet, with a proposal to create a stakeholder forum to be considered.

Potential communication channels for ACCAW, including social media, were discussed, including how messaging could be augmented with stakeholder reach.

Action Point: Establish a communications subcommittee, with secretariat provided by DAFM.

Action Point: DAFM to develop an ACCAW website.

3. Update from Brachycephalic sub-group

Summary of sub-group's report and recommendations, a link to same was previously circulated to ACCAW.

The group welcomed and endorsed the report of the sub-group and its recommendations.

The group agreed to act on the recommendations of the sub-group.

ACCAW agreed to send letter, drafted by Brachycephalic sub-group, to advertisers,. Proposal raised to ask relevant organisations/bodies to explore using famous clients to promote letter.

Action Point: ACCAW to send Brachycephalic sub-group letter, to advertisers and relevant stakeholders.

4. What messages does the group propose for a responsible dog ownership campaign?

ACCAW discussed paper, previously circulated, by APDT.

Suggestion raised to lobby the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), to change the Dog Breeding Establishment Act, however this is beyond the remit of ACCAW, which advises the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Two main messages were put forward:

- How a dog can be/is sourced.
- Making sure prospective dog owners choose a dog appropriate for their lifestyle.

Action Point: IKC to provide link on this topic and the Scottish perspective, which will then be circulated by the Secretariat.

Action Point: All group members to provide key messages on this topic, which will be considered by the new communications sub-committee.

5. What messages does the group propose for a responsible cat ownership campaign?

ACCAW member from the Cat Hospital gave a summary of a document – 10 messages on cat ownership, which they agreed to circulate to group.

Action Point: The Cat Hospital to circulate document on cat ownership.

Action Point: Put item on next agenda.

6. What generic responsible pet ownership messages (not species-specific) does the group propose?

It was agreed this messaging should be part of the remit of the new communications sub-committee. ACCAW to have input on coverage of animals/pets.

7. Update on EU discussions in relation to companion animal welfare

Summary of key EU groups and function(s) of same given. Also stated the Advertising and Sale of pets, Statutory Instrument, was discussed at EU level.

Action Point: Going forward, DAFM to circulate information on EU meetings.

8. AOB

Group's attention called to RSPCA concerns relating to the UK's Genetic Technology Precision Breeding Act 2023.

Noted Dog's Trust submitted a question on dogs for inclusion in the Irish Census.

IKC requested ACCAW discuss neutering in a future meeting. Alan Rossiter to seek permission to circulate document on neutering.

Noted this will be Sarah Lynch's last meeting for some time as she begins maternity leave, she will be replaced by the executive director of the Dog's Trust.

9. Date of next meeting

TBC