

# **Advisory Council on Companion Animal Welfare**

**Date:** 27th October 2022

**Venue:** Backweston campus

**Meeting Time:** 14.00 – 16.00

## **Attendees:**

Seán O’Laoide (Chair), Eoin Ryan (DAFM), Sean Murray (DAFM), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Alan Walsh (DAFM), Conor Dowling (ISPCA), Karla Dunne (Dogs Trust), Rory Breathnach (UCD), Una O’Toole (Irish Blue Cross), Sarah Lynch (Dogs Trust), Alan Rossiter (Veterinary Ireland), Claire Corridan (UCD), Claire Meade (The Cat Hospital), Maureen Byrne, Jim Stephens (IKC).

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

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed.

## **2. Brachycephalics**

### **Brachycephalic Sub-Group**

The meeting was informed that the Group have met twice to date with the next meeting scheduled for early December 2022. The group are working on setting a vision for the next 2-5 years and are progressing a working document.

The meeting was informed Irish Kennel Club (IKC) will not endorse puppies born from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024, until verified by breeder, with tests to be made easy to perform and affordable, with the option to revise same as required.

The 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 deadline will be adopted by IKC members. Testing will be standardised with the development of a home test followed by a veterinary test. Sanctions for non-conformers will include the prohibition of registration with the IKC.

A question was posed for the group to consider - what is a healthy dog? Chair asked if the group had the capacity to consider such issues and expand. It was agreed to review any possible expansion of the group over time.

The possible renaming of the Brachycephalic Group was also discussed with no decision taken.

The meeting was informed of a proposed private members bill seeking to update the Dog Breeding Establishment Act, if the bill were to be enacted.

### 3. Update from Animal Welfare Seminar

Seminar took place during the first week of October 2022 and was attended by Animal Charities funded by DAFM. Presentations were provided by DAFM and UCD on DAFM animal welfare application process a further presentation on DAFM policy goals for supporting animal welfare charities and UCD presented on applying effectiveness approaches in practice.

Feedback was positive from attendees, who took the opportunity to collaborate and knowledge share in breakout groups. Challenges noted among the sector were, the growing number of animals, funding and volunteer burnout. Dogs with behavioural issues were identified as an issue which could be resolved if more accredited trainers were available to support owners.

It was noted that DAFM funding for charities is done on a case by case multifactored basis and is not wholly dependent on animal numbers.

**Action Point:** DAFM to compile information on Infection Control ahead of next meeting.

**Action Point:** UCD to source international guidelines for on Feral Cats disease issues.

### 4. Responsible Pet Ownership

The group discussed a proposal to investigate drawing up of a checklist for potential owners based on certain relevant principles and based on metrics. As part of this process case studies and videos on dog ownership could be used to inform potential owners.

The potential of a schools education programme on pet ownership was discussed. Issues with school access and overcrowded curriculum were noted. Further discussed was the potential of compiling a business case to justify curriculum inclusion as the value to the economy of dogs which it was claimed is in the region of €3 Billion p/a.

It was noted that Nordic countries are reported to require potential pet owners to complete a course and obtain a licence before they own a pet.

**Action Point:** Invite representatives from charities to a future meeting, to discuss content for school present

**Action Point:** DAFM to circulate IKC buying a puppy guide to the group.

### 5. Date of Next Meeting

15<sup>th</sup> December 2:30 (Brachycephalic Sub Group meeting to take place the same day at 1:30).

### 6. AOB

The Group were given an update on the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture Food and the Marine. The committee had spent six months engaging with stakeholder groups and developed proposals.

DAFM advised that ear cropping legislation is at an advanced stage. IKC advised that any dogs who have been ear cropped can't be registered with the IKC.

The meeting were informed that December 8<sup>th</sup> 2022 is Animal Welfare Awareness Day.

IKC informed of a conference to take place 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2022, covering breadth of dog health issues with a host of eminent speakers across the event.