



## **CFSG response**

### **Defra Licensing Consultation**

#### **Q1. Single Animal Establishment Licence - CFSG to agree**

The members of CFSG welcome the proposal to introduce revised regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to update and consolidate the animal licensing system. CFSG members agree with the principle of introducing a single generic Animal Enterprise Licence. We would like to make the point at the beginning of this consultation response that one of members, Guide Dogs, does not support all of the comments regarding the licensing of premises and in many of the areas would like exemptions to be considered in light of their exceptional position breeding dogs to support the charity's aims. They have submitted an individual response providing more detail which CFSG endorse.

A single generic licence makes sense from a policy, administrative and operational level. However, it is essential that the conditions which apply to each regulated activity will ensure the welfare of the animals involved in the regulated activities. For this reason, the revised regulations should strengthen and update the current legal minimum requirements. CFSG members recommend that current respective model licence conditions are adopted by all Local Authorities and incorporated as conditions of licences in respect of each regulated activity covered by a generic animal welfare establishments' licence. It is essential that activity specific conditions are mandatory not voluntary conditions of licences issued under the new regulations, which need to be in place to tailor the model licence conditions, and that licence conditions are consistently applied by all Local Authorities to each of the regulated activities. We agree entirely that the review presents an opportunity to ensure that up to date knowledge on animal health and welfare is incorporated into the development of conditions that will apply under generic licences. CFSG members recommend that existing model licence conditions are audited, strengthened and amended if necessary in liaison with sector specialists to ensure the conditions enshrined within new regulations reflect the latest knowledge and deliver highest welfare standards.

A loophole in the current Animal Boarding Establishments Act means that if animal boarding is not the main activity of a business, it is not required to be licensed under the Act. CFSG believes that this loophole must be closed so that it is not possible for individuals to set themselves up primarily as a business which is outside of the scope of licensing and to then offer boarding without the need to be licensed. Currently, this loophole means that greyhound and other working dog trainers, dog walkers and dog groomers which board dogs do not need to be licensed.

The consultation correctly states that the provisions of licensing apply equally to online retail outlets, including those which are only running a comparatively small breeding operation, as it does to those with a high street or other physical premises.

This is essential for enforcement bodies to understand, as so far there is little evidence that significant licensing activity of these premises is being carried out. CFSG would encourage the Government to work with Local Authorities, PAAG (who have submitted a more detailed response to this consultation on regulating online sales) and individual websites to ensure that this message gets out fully to online retailers – that they need an animal licence to sell animals, and that they should demonstrate their licence number to ensure that the animal-buying public can differentiate between those that have been inspected to uphold the standard and those who have not.

CFSG has concerns about the capacity of some Local Authorities to provide inspectors. We also have concerns about the competency of appointed inspectors, who we believe need to be given appropriate training in animal welfare so that they have the knowledge needed to inspect against licence conditions. A breadth of animal welfare knowledge may be needed by inspectors when, for example, visiting premises at which multiple regulated activities are being carried out (e.g. a pet shop that also breeds dogs for sale and offers boarding kennels). CFSG members recommend that inspectors are “competent” to inspect licensed premises and that they are trained in the appropriate range of animal welfare issues. We also recommend that inspectors are specialists in animal welfare licensing. New regulations must define the competency required of inspectors in the context of each regulated activity under a generic animal establishments licence. CFSG suggest that consideration is given to an organisation providing a central unit of appropriately trained inspectors who can be employed by Local Authorities from time to time to carry out inspections as and when required if Local Authorities do not have appropriately trained inspectors themselves. Dogs Trust recommends that a central unit of animal welfare inspectors is developed by the government and is independent, with no profit making commercial interests.

## **Question 2 – Use of Model Conditions by Local Authorities – CFSG to agree**

CFSG believe that there should be a requirement to use the model conditions by local authorities as it would facilitate the objective of coherence and consistency of standards. Simply, the requirement for local authorities to guarantee to use the same model conditions would help to raise standards and safeguard animal welfare within licensed establishments. The model conditions could set out the minimum competencies required by an inspector to inspect the various types of animal establishment licence. It is also important that those responsible for inspection are adequately trained to do so. Inspectors should therefore be trained in animal welfare and the use of the Model Licensing Conditions.

We would recommend that the conditions should be reviewed every three years to ensure that they remain up-to-date and fit for purpose by a Defra led or supported group of stakeholders, although Dogs Trust believes the Model Licence conditions should be reviewed annually. CFSG members have the expertise and willingness to contribute to this process. Model conditions should be based on scientific evidence and where possible peer reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and robust.

To help ensure consistency of application of the model conditions, all local authorities should follow the Model Licence Conditions published by the CIEH as a minimum standard although if additional conditions are applied to licences local authorities should be required to clearly explain why, in terms of animal welfare why.

## **Question 3- Prohibit the sale of puppies below the age of 8 weeks – CFSG to agree**

CFSG agrees with this proposal and the provision is already in place via the current Model Licence Conditions for Pet Vending. Behaviour research supports this as the appropriate threshold linked with the rearing environment as a significant predisposing factor for the development of problematic behaviour<sup>1</sup> and aggression towards people.

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<sup>1</sup> Casey, R.A., Loftus, B., Bolster, C., Richards, G., Blackwell, E.J., (2013) Human directed aggression in domestic dogs (*Canis familiaris*): occurrence in different contexts and risk factors, Applied Animal Behaviour Science. McMillan, F.D., Duffy, D.L., Serpell, J.A., (2011) Mental health of dogs formerly used as ‘breeding stock’ in commercial breeding establishments. Applied Animal Behaviour Science. 135. 86-94. McMillan, F.D., Serpell, J.A., Duffy, D.L., Masaoud, E., Dohoo, I.R., (2013) Differences in behavioral characteristics between dogs obtained as puppies from pet stores and those obtained from noncommercial breeders. Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. 242. 1359-1363.

We believe that the current ban on licensed breeders from selling puppies under 8 weeks old should continue and be widened to include all sales and non-commercial transactions where puppies are gifted. One single limit for all dogs is appropriate, simple and easily understood by breeders, the public and enforcement. It is both unfair and ineffective to limit the ban on selling puppies under 8 weeks old to licensed breeders as they make up as little as 12 per cent of the market.<sup>2</sup> CFSG believes that ALL dogs should be afforded this protection, for the benefit of their welfare and for peace of mind of the puppy buyer, irrespective of the licence status of the seller. It is imperative that the loophole provided by Section 8 of the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999 permitting the sale of dogs under 8 weeks 'to the keeper of a licensed pet shop or a licensed Scottish rearing establishment' be closed. Research has found that dogs separated earlier than 8 weeks and sent to a pet shop for sale were even more likely to develop problematic avoidant and fearful behaviours<sup>3</sup>. The combination of separation and impoverished environment during this critical period proved particularly inhibiting to a puppy's social development. The need to amend the law to cover not only sale, but also transfer of ownership or keepership will close any loopholes potentially created.

Eight weeks is already a time limit used in several areas of law. Dogs must, from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016, be microchipped everywhere in the UK by the age of 8 weeks. European law bans the transportation of puppies under 8 weeks of age without their mother<sup>4</sup>. Crucially, in the UK, it is an offence for licensed breeders to sell dogs under the age of 8 weeks. Not only is 8 weeks the legal minimum age for sale of a puppy in over half of EU member states, but some member states such as Denmark and France have already extended the 8 week limit to include non-commercial and gifted transfers of keepership and ownership.

As this is a welfare law, there should be a provision to waive the 8 weeks rule in the event that there is a medical necessity either for puppy or mother, but only for puppy or mother and in situations where the future behaviour of the puppies is at risk due to the way in which they are being reared. This should be seen as a rare occurrence, and never be for trade purposes, so should require certification from a qualified veterinarian that departure from the mother before 8 weeks is necessary.

There is also a case to be made for an exemption for certain service dog environments, such as Guide Dogs, who have a well established and successful process of weaning puppies earlier than eight weeks of age. However these exemptions should be handled on an individual basis.

Whilst the question relates directly to dogs, CFSG would also recommend that a prohibition on the sale of kittens below 8 weeks should also be considered.

#### **Question 4: Statutory licensing threshold for dog breeders is set at three or more litters per year –CFSG to disagree**

CFSG supports the view that the threshold for licensing must be lowered, but reducing the level from five or more litters a year to three or two will not fully address the flaws in identifying those in the business of breeding who require an inspection and licence. The key requirement for enforcement is to ensure Local Authorities can more easily identify those reaching the threshold of licensing and inspection regimes to ease the administration burden and a reduction in litter numbers is not the way to do this.

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<sup>2</sup> [4] Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (2015); Licensed Dog Breeding in Great Britain; p.8

<sup>3</sup> Pierantoni, L., Albertini M., & Pirrone, F. (2011): Prevalence of owner-reported behaviours in dogs separated from the litter at two different ages, Veterinary Record 2011; 169: 468

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farm-animal-welfare-during-transportation#eu-regulation-on-the-welfare-of-animals-in-transport>

Currently there is some confusion around the licensing threshold for dog breeding establishments, with the two thresholds of either being in the “business of breeding dogs for sale” and/or producing five litters or more in a 12-month period. This is a vague distinction and confusing for the public and creates unnecessary complexity Local Authorities. Consequently, licensing has been poorly enforced. There is little doubt that the current law is ineffective and in need of replacement. Figures collated under the Freedom of Information Act indicate that there are only 895 licensed breeders in England, Scotland and Wales, producing only 12% puppies estimated to be born in mainland Great Britain<sup>5</sup>. If 88% of puppies are born outside of the licensing as currently constituted, it is questionable whether it is even right to call it a licensing regime, and the Government is to be credited for accepting the argument that it is in dire need of reform.

In 2015, Wales acted to reduce the threshold to the third litter, as proposed in the consultation<sup>6</sup>. This was a welcome step, as it brought an estimated additional 500 breeders under the scope of licensing, and thus subject to Model Licensing, Conditions increasing the number of inspected premises by 125% (from 400 to 900). Nonetheless CFSG believes that this needs to go further to create fully transparent system which can be easily operated by Local Authorities. The aim of any change should be to reduce the resource burden whilst lifting welfare standards.

Therefore, CFSG believes that it would most effective to create a process by which anyone breeding, selling or transferring the ownership of a puppy, or kitten, regardless of any financial transaction or gain, would register with their local authority to obtain a registration number. Any person then breeding, selling or transferring the ownership of two to three litters, depending where the threshold is set, would be required to extend that registration to a formal licence application. This would be subject to inspection and payment of a fee. The necessity for a registration number would come from the need to use it on all forms of advertising. The creation of an offence to breed, sell or trade a puppy without a registration number would enable local authorities to more easily identify and deal with the unscrupulous breeders and dealers without taking on the extremely arduous and resource intensive activity of proving their activity.

One of the key goals of this reform, coupled with the reformed Model Licensing Conditions (as discussed in Question 2 of this consultation), is to hardwire welfare into the practice of dog breeding. With a need to register, these conditions can become cultural norms more quickly amongst those breeding commercially, just as microchipping will do by becoming law. Such a registration system will

- Encourage all breeding to meet welfare standards
- Increase transparency for both the Local Authority and the public
- Weed out bad breeders
- Tackle irresponsible advertising - The Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) support this.

Ultimately, by virtue of a registration number for all breeding, it will help Local Authorities identify those reaching the threshold of license and inspection regime, easing the administration burden. However, it must be clear that the demonstration of a registration number, unlike the licence, should not be taken by the buyer as an indication of any guarantee of standards.

On the issue of the statutory licensing threshold, the majority of our members would support a lowering of the threshold to two litters, as it will hardwire the standards for licensing deeper into the culture of dog breeding. Given that this cost can be recovered by Local Authorities from applicants, this measure should not impose extra cost burden to Local Authorities. However, there is a body of opinion both within CFSG and within Local Authority enforcement, which would prefer the limit to be set at three litters as is the case in Wales.

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<sup>5</sup> Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (2015); Licensed Dog Breeding in Great Britain; p.8

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/sub-ld10001%20-%20the%20animal%20welfare%20\(breeding%20of%20dogs\)%20regulations%202014/sub-ld10001-e.pdf](http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/sub-ld10001%20-%20the%20animal%20welfare%20(breeding%20of%20dogs)%20regulations%202014/sub-ld10001-e.pdf)

This reform does raise the issue of the variability of the licence fee across Local Authorities. Research revealed huge variations in the licence – from £23 to £741<sup>7</sup>. Increasing the number of licence holders will likely to bring this variability into the spotlight and raise questions about fairness and legality. We feel there is a good case for issuing further guidance to Local Authorities to ensure greater consistency and transparency in how these fees are set locally. Additionally, some may argue that potentially increasing the number of people needing a licence will place an intolerable burden on Local Authority resources. We believe this need not be the case. Local Authorities are able to recover the costs of administering applications through the licence fee. Furthermore, the impact and resource cost on Local Authorities can be reduced still further through the removal of the requirement to prove someone requires a licence for their breeding activity.

#### **Question 5 – Legally require pet sales to provide written information when selling animals - CFSG to agree**

CFSG broadly agrees with the proposal to make it a legal requirement for the pet vendor to provide written information when selling animals on the proviso that there are clear guidelines on the quality and quantity of information that must be provided. This would ensure consistency and would also help licensing officers assess whether the pet vendor is meeting the conditions of the licence. Furthermore, the information must be from a reputable and recognised source.

The pet sector, both charity and industry produce information in both print and online versions which cover many different taxa including dogs and cats. They are an ideal example of information already produced and available for use by responsible pet vendors so as to better inform pet owners and drive positive change in attitudes and behaviours to pet ownership. Members of the Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme are already required to provide up-to-date written information with every puppy sold. We also know some work has been done on this as part of the Puppy Contract and also through the Pet Advertising Advisory Group. A working group of CFSG has also started work in preparing a kitten checklist to advise anyone considering purchasing a kitten or cat of things to check and ask. We believe that the statutory duty to provide this kind of information could have real benefits if implemented and enforced effectively.

The considerable footfall through pet shops provides the perfect platform to educate members of the public on key issues relating to a range of pets (even if they do not sell that pet) including dogs or cats and other types of taxa. They are in a unique position to distribute advice on welfare and responsible pet ownership to a large customer base which could include hard-to-reach groups. To ensure advice is of the highest standard, sales staff in licenced pet shops should be required to hold a relevant qualification to ensure that they possess the requisite knowledge when selling pets and that they pass on correct information to new owners. It should not simply be a case of handing over written information. Training and qualifications should be level 2 for shop staff and level 3 for managers, and standardised to guarantee uniformity across the country. Training should also be evidence based and up to date to ensure quality. This training should be assessed and revised on a regular basis to reflect current knowledge and understanding of animal welfare. Qualifications should be written into the relevant model conditions.

#### **Question 6 - Not relevant to CFSG**

#### **Question 7 – Allow licenses to issued for a fixed term set at any point during the year CFSG to agree**

CFSG would agree that it makes sense to have a more flexible approach that reduces administrative burden and requirement for renewal within a 12-month period. Administratively this would prevent a backlog of inspections at one time of year.

#### **Question 8 – Increase the maximum length of a licence that local authorities may issues up to three years – CFSG to agree**

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<sup>7</sup> Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (2015); Licensed Dog Breeding in Great Britain; p.8

CFSG do agree that a risk-based approach to inspections, such as is often the case with livestock establishments, would allow LAs to focus their resources where they are most needed, with a clear structure. This approach would enable local authorities to use that risk based approach to benefit both them and business. There would need to be a nationally agreed and adopted risk based framework which could be based on a scoring system similar to that for restaurants which would free up resource and ensure those not reaching the higher scores can be inspected more frequently.<sup>8</sup> This framework would need to be developed and implemented by a Defra led or supported group involving Local Authorities. Often it is currently based on the order in which the inspections arise, as there is no way to identify the premises which present a higher risk. Dogs Trust however, disagrees with the proposal to increase the maximum length of a licence that local authorities may issue and supports annual inspections as a minimum. Within a risk-based approach they believe there should be no indemnity for any establishment from unannounced inspections.

CFSG would state that all first inspections before a decision is made on length of licence issued should be compulsory, thorough and immediate.

Any risk based assessment which allows for longer periods between inspections should incorporate both the facility for spot checks and for inspections / revocation/suspension of the licence (without the need to go to court) should there be a complaint or any evidence that the conditions of the licence are not being met.

#### **Question 9 – Licence holders to transfer licences to new owners. –**

If there is a move towards more risk based approach to licensing it does rely on the standards of each individual holding the licence and so it is important that any new owner holds the relevant knowledge or qualifications and then can demonstrate an ability to meet the same standards which would place them in a lower risk category with less inspection. CFSG does not think that breeding establishment licenses should be transferable.

There may be a need to transfer a licence following a bereavement, ill-health or retirement and it may be to an individual who has been closely involved in the running of the business. We would suggest that when licences are transferred to new owners (and where it has not previously been revoked), the sites under new ownership should be inspected within a short period of new owners taking over (we suggest two months), to ensure that standards are being maintained. This should be the exemption rather than the rule, and licences should not be transferable in other situations.

In instances where a licence is revoked for reasons of failing to meet the welfare needs of animals, it should not be transferable to someone (relative, member of staff or such) even if they become owners, to enable a business to continue trading if the person whose licence was revoked remains associated with or benefits directly or indirectly from the continued operation of the establishment.

#### **Question 10 – Licence holders to notify local authorities of major changes –**

CFSG feels that this needs to be considered carefully if there is a move towards risk based inspections and longer licence periods. 'Major changes' needs to be clearly defined. This should include significant refurbishment of the premises or long-term changes to the number of staff working there. If the licensed premises were expanding (e.g. boarding kennel increasing the number of runs; pet shop extending the size of their shop to incorporate additional taxa), then we would expect the business to have to notify the local authority, as this is likely to have an impact on the particulars of their licence.

#### **Question 11 – Registration requirement for performing animals – CFSG to agree to maintain registration**

#### **Question 12 – Registration system for performing animals**

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<sup>8</sup> [http://ratings.food.gov.uk/enhanced-search/en-GB/%5E/york/desc\\_rating/0/%5E/EqualAll/1/1/10](http://ratings.food.gov.uk/enhanced-search/en-GB/%5E/york/desc_rating/0/%5E/EqualAll/1/1/10)

### **Question 13 – Powers of Entry – CFSG to disagree**

In the review of Defra's powers of entry, different recommendations are made for the powers of entry under the current legislation on dog breeding, animal boarding and pet shops. Some recommendations are made for changes to the powers of entry under the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 and the Pet Animals Act 1951. However, CFSG recommends that the power of entry under the Breeding of Dogs Act 1991 should remain unchanged.

The review states: 'It is important that mistreatment in breeding establishments – which, where standards are poor, can be informally known as "puppy farms" – is investigated. The reasoning for not changing the Power of Entry is: 'As the power is reacting to suspicion of an offence and is based solely in a judicial warrant any further safeguards would be unnecessary and prohibitive. It is important that entry can be made without notice being given. Were this not the case there would not only be delay to what is commonly an urgent entry, but the giving notice could defeat the purpose of the entry.'

CFSG does not agree that reasonable notice should be given of the application of a warrant nor that a maximum of four persons may make use of the power of entry. We believe that it would compromise animal welfare if it was not possible for a sufficient number of persons to enter premises to carry out an inspection and take the necessary action to protect animal welfare. For example, in establishments with a large number of animals, there would need to be a sufficient number of persons to be able to document evidence, make arrests and to attend to the animals. We do not believe that four people will be sufficient in every circumstance.

We wholeheartedly agree with the proposals that notice of entry should not be provided in cases where such notice would defeat the purpose of entry. However, it is sensible that in situations where this is not applicable, notice is provided so that the licence holder can be present at the establishment for the inspection.

Dogs Trust believe there should be no indemnity for any establishment from unannounced inspections.

### **Question 14- Exemption from licensing for businesses affiliated to a body accredited by UKAS – CFSG to disagree – there should be no exemption from licensing**

Members of the CFSG do not feel that businesses affiliated to a body accredited by UKAS should be exempt from the need to hold a licence, and that the issuing of licences should be the responsibility of the local authority. The Kennel Club however does agree that dog breeders who are members of a UKAS accredited scheme should be exempt from the need to hold a local authority licence because they believe that this would incentivize breeders to join the only UKAS accredited scheme currently in operation (the Assured Breeder Scheme), which has higher breeding standards than local authority licensing standards. The majority of CFSG members agree that there is a place for Accreditation Schemes to work as part of a single tier local authority risk based licensing system where it helps and encourages businesses to achieve and maintain higher welfare standards as set out in more detail below. With such an approach, the local authority could use it as part of their risk based approach to enable them to come up with a low priority risk rating for any business affiliated with such a Scheme. This is the model currently working for farm animals. Though we also understand that full exemptions apply in other areas, the majority of CFSG members are concerned about creating a two tiered system with regards to licensing. It is crucial that there is no indemnity for any establishment from unannounced inspections.

For accreditation to work, consistency on standards and enforcement, underpinned by inspector training, must be a requirement of both LA licensing and any potential alternative accredited schemes. Any accredited schemes must be transparent, and appropriate information be readily available to potential consumers and shared with the Local Authority. This could be achieved as a requirement for a licence number or accreditation number on the premises or as a link on website advertisements. As this could be used to improve awareness and drive up standards, we believe there must also be a requirement for public access to simple on-line registers of LA licensed establishments and alternative accredited schemes. This should include information on breeder's name, licence or accreditation identification number and status. Any alternative accredited schemes must include the requirement to report enforcement issues, such as breaches of the Animal Welfare Act, to statutory authorities.

As already set out, appropriate standards must be set for all establishments combined with a robust inspection and monitoring process. The model licensing conditions referenced in question two set out the minimum required standards that the CFSG believes that licensed animal establishments should meet. These model conditions are not aspirational targets, and there is significant scope for animal establishments to exceed these model licensing conditions. However, it must be noted at present there is no commercial incentive for licensed establishments to exceed these minimum standards. Opening up the licensing sector to independent regulators could have the potential to drive up welfare standard and assist consumers in making better choices. Independent regulators would be able to set higher than the legally required minimum standards. This would have the potential to provide a commercial incentive to animal business licence holders to achieve higher welfare standards, as these could be certified and consumers could then be sign posted towards these establishments.

The ‘licensing’ of independent regulators should also specify which type of establishments that regulator is able to assess as it may be that an independent regulator could be approved to grant a licence to accredit a dog breeding and boarding establishment but not a pet shop or riding establishment etc.

### **Potential for reducing the burden of inspection on Local Government**

Realistically the use of specialist inspectors, who have the appropriate knowledge to properly assess compliance to licensing conditions will clearly require these inspectors to operate across a number of local authority areas. There are a number of models by which this could be achieved, one such model could be a number of local authorities working together to employ a single inspector to do their inspections. Another option would be for the Government to approve a single England wide inspectorate, to which local authorities could then contract their inspections out. A third option is a central unit of animal welfare inspectors developed by the Government that is independent with no profit making commercial interests. The fourth option is the allowing of independent regulators to accredit animal related establishments and therefore enable a lower frequency of inspection for licence holders.

Exempting some low risk establishments from additional LA inspections where they have already been inspected by a UKAS accredited independent regulator, has the potential to allow already under-resourced local authorities to focus their attention and inspections on higher risk businesses, who either have not qualified for accreditation by an independent regulator or are operating as unlicensed breeding establishments. This could drive up welfare standards in these establishments and increase the opportunity for enforcement action against rogue operators. This would be particularly effective where all breeders are required to be registered as the numbers of litters produced then becomes a matter for Local Authorities to consider as part of their risk-based assessment before licensing.

An example of this model is already in operation in the dog breeding sector with the Kennel Club’s Assured Breeder Scheme. There is a charge for scheme membership, which incorporates the cost of inspecting the establishment, however this could be balanced through the use of the risk based approach by Local Authorities. The Local Authority can issue a reduced licence fee (which can be upwards of £700 per annum<sup>9</sup>) in light of the lighter burden this breeder will place on their inspection resources to help drive a commercial incentive. This again demonstrates the need for the single-tier approach with the Accredited Scheme and Local Authority working together to enable its success.

While this model has been based around dog breeding establishments, this model could equally apply to other business models which would fall under the new single licence concept.

### **Question 15 Sector-led UKAS-accredited certification schemes to improve animal welfare in unlicensed areas**

CFSG recognises that sector led accreditation schemes can help where there is no regulation in place. Nonetheless, this is an opportunity to consider regulation of the commercial activities which currently can be run by anyone with little

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experience or checks and that have an impact on the public. These include animal sanctuaries, animal exhibitors, dog walkers and sitters, dog groomers and dog trainers and behaviourists,

### **Animal Sanctuaries**

A number of CFSG members are also members of the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH). The association is a membership body that promotes best practice in animal welfare and rehoming for dogs and cats. ADCH has developed a Code of Practice which sets out the standards of animal care that as an Association believe represent “best practice” for the rehoming sector. The organisation comprises over 120 rescue and rehoming centres, all of which are all committed to attaining the standards set out in this Code of Practice. Some members already achieve the standards, however, some still have some way to go. CFSG however has concerns over those animal sanctuaries that operate out of the reach of ADCH. Whilst many will be attaining high standards of animal welfare, many will not be.

This sector remains unregulated but we are aware of calls for government regulation in Wales of this sector. The membership of CFSG believe that should regulations be introduced to this end, rescue organisations and sanctuaries which achieve the ADCH standards, whilst still needing a licence, would be looked at as low risk in a manner way to which has been described under Question 14.

### **Dog Training and Behaviourists**

Dog training is an area that there is currently no regulation, currently anybody can set themselves up in business as a dog trainer without any formal qualifications. Many dog owners will assume that the dog trainer they have commissioned will be qualified to train their dog. Poor training can be extremely detrimental to a dog’s welfare – for example can lead to poor socialisation, bad habits, aggression; or can cause pain and fear in the case of trainers who use overly unpleasant aversive techniques and devices, such as electric shock collars. Again these are bodies operating on a self-regulatory basis to seek to set a standard but we would like to see a requirement for those operating as dog trainers and behaviourists to be in possession of a nationally recognised qualification for dog training.

### **Dog Grooming**

The British Dog Groomers’ Association (part of PIF, the UK trade association for pet businesses) is currently developing a register for individual groomers that the public would be able to consult in order to find a professionally qualified and accountable groomer who has the competence and ability to groom a dog safely. Minimum requirements will include the requirement to hold the City & Guilds Level 3 Diploma, which contains units that cover safety in the salon and correct use of grooming equipment. In time, we would like to see such a scheme recognised by the government. We believe that further consideration should be given to licensing dog groomers in order to safeguard animal welfare in the UK.

### **Dog Walkers**

Poor standards in dog walking have the potential to seriously impact dog welfare. For this reason we also believe that further consideration should be given to licensing dog walkers in order to safeguard animal welfare in the UK.

### **Regulation of Cat Breeding**

While the commercial sale of cats is currently regulated under the Pet Animals Act 1951, unlike dogs there is no legislation in relation to the breeding of cats. CFSG believe that there is need to consider addressing development of a set of standards by which both pedigree and non-pedigree cats are bred in England (and the rest of the UK). A number of CFSG members recently worked together in the production of a preliminary report investigating the breeding and sale of cats in the UK. Many litters are accidental or hobbyist in nature and the more commercially inclined may seek to breed to a high welfare standard and will by choice adopt high standards. For the remainder extra motivation may be required to improve the health and welfare of cats. Potentially an accredited self regulating scheme for cat breeding could assist. The scheme could be used certify that cat breeders are achieving a high welfare standard, which would allow welfare organisations and the

Government to direct kitten purchasers to these breeders. This would work alongside the need to register as breeders when selling any kitten and being told a licence may be required in future as set out under Question 4.

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