



Minutes of the Meeting

7th March 2016 2pm-4.30pm

In Attendance:

Steve Dean (SD)
Marisa Heath (MH)
Richard Hooker (RH)
Anne McBride (AB)
Meriel France (MF)
David Cavill DC)
Paula Boyden (PB)
Susie Child (SC)
Caroline Peacock (CP)
Mike Webb (MW)
Dee McIntosh (DM)
Claire Bessant (CB)
Steve Crow (SC)
Claire Calder (CC)
Sam Gaines (SGa)
Bill Lambert (BL)
Steve Goody (SG)
Clive Byles (CBy)
Claire Horton (CH)
Ed Hayes (EH)
Mark Berry (MB)
David Bowles (DB)
Trish Colville (TC)
Jacqui Cuff (JC)
Peter Hepburn (PH)

Chairman
Co-ordinator
PDSA & Vice-Chairman
Animal Behaviour & Training Council
Pet Industry Federation
Pet Education, Training and Behaviour Council
Dogs Trust
BVA
Guide Dogs
Battersea Dogs & Cats Home
Battersea Dogs & Cats Home
ICAT
GCCF
Dogs Trust
RSPCA
The Kennel Club
Blue Cross
Woodgreen
AHWBE
The Kennel Club
National Companion Animal Focus Group
RSPCA
BSAVA
Cats Protection
Cats Protection

1. Welcome and introductions –

The chairman welcomed new Members - PfMA, Animal Behaviour & Training Council and Pet Education, Training & Behaviour Council.

It was noted that the membership of CFSG was getting large and meetings were getting more difficult to ensure outcomes. CFSG will only consider membership applications from those who can bring an entirely new expertise to the Group which is currently absent.

It was clarified that CFSG was formed to get the right balance of argument to get differing perspectives to aid discussion and was set up to provide the AHWBE and therefore ultimately the Minister with a balanced and reasoned view from across the sector. Whilst consensus would always be the preferable outcome it was recognised that there may will be divergent views on specific issues. CFSG will seek to reflect the balance and, if there is a divergent view, that organisation will be invited to put a paragraph into the document on what that is.

2. Apologies –

Rose Smart (The Kennel Club) & Michael Bellingham (PfMA)

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed

4. Matters arising

a) Finance & Membership update

CFSG has three new members. All the new subscriptions have been paid for this year.

b) CFSG Working Groups Update

The Model Conditions group met 2 weeks ago and the body of licence conditions have been signed off. The Group is currently pulling together the Home Boarding document. The next meeting is early April. ICAT produced a robust statement on why cats should not be home-boarded and that document will be shared amongst members.

DT and RSPCA, as part of the Zoonotics group, have a meeting scheduled with Defra for stakeholders on the 22nd March. The last rabies core group meeting was cancelled so that is slow progress.

c) Wording on Training Device for Dog Code (paper to be tabled)

CFSG is responsible for revising the Dog and Cat Welfare Codes. Within the Dog Code is a section on behaviour and training which needs some clearer wording as suggested by the Minister. CFSG has been sending drafts around by email and came up with an agreed set of words to be sent to the Minister for approval. If, and once, approved, they will be published with the revised Codes for the public.

d) Update on redesign of Cat & Dog Welfare Codes

CFSG is currently on the process of re-designing the format of the Codes to make them more accessible to the public. There is a cost to doing this that members of CFSG need to meet. Members agreed to fund this cost with MH working on the design with publishers and then reporting back to the Group before sending them to Defra for approval

5. The Breeding & Sale of Cats Report

A preliminary report has been written and this is the first time all the cat organisations have got together and produced a report like this. A lot of the recommendations say more work is required but they do outline the topics. Members of the CFSG welcomed the report.

Those working on the report were not trying to establish that the scale of cat breeding was equivalent to dog breeding as the scale issue is very different and cat breeding is mainly done in smaller scale domestic premises. The key point arising from the report is the question of what could be achieved in regards to regulation of cat breeding and the Group agreed there is some way to go before it would be possible to persuade the Government that it is worth considering. There is a need to gather more information and data. Additionally, there is a need for collective and more focused use of guidance and education materials as clearly there are irresponsible breeders of dogs but most of those who are breeding dogs are deliberate whereas the cat breeders are often doing so out of ignorance.

The Group decided that CFSG would seek to pull out the key areas within the report that could be developed further and to report back at the next meeting on how the issues of breeding and selling of cats could be highlighted at first stages with AHWBE and Defra with a plan to undertake evidence based approach to work up the scale and impact of the key issues.

6. Defra Licensing Review Response

CFSG received an overview from Mark Berry, Chairman of the National Companion Animal Welfare Forum. Mark told the group that his group had worked with the LGA in getting their response to the consultation together and the view is that there are some excellent recommendations to bring pet licensing into the modern way local government inspects other types of premises such as food or health and safety. A potential risk based approach with flexible periods is how they do everything else. The only two questions that they had was with Question 4 on the litter numbers as for enforcement going from five to three makes no difference at all. The emphasis has to be on breeders to make themselves known to the local authority e.g. if you want to run a food business you have to make yourself known and the authority will then inspect. If breeders who are responsible can get on with what they want to do, then the Local Authority can focus on the irresponsible breeders. Currently there is little resource to go out and find those breeders and how is it proven that someone has had five or three litters? The NCAWF has stated that anyone breeding or selling should register their first litter with a unique number so there is an audit trail. At what point they go from registration to licence is open to debate but a registration system makes it simple. The person selling would be required to put that registration number on any advert.

CFSG's draft response also took the same approach and other members had also followed this model. There was some concern expressed over those involved in breeding for charitable causes such as Guide Dogs or Assistance Dogs and the need for exemption in these cases to be noted in CFSG's response to the consultation.

CFSG also agreed that any accreditation scheme needs to be part of a Local Authority regime and used to drive up welfare standards. Those on such a scheme could be on a longer licensing scheme with a lower fee as part of the risk-based approach (frequency) but it should work with the Local Authority and not alone in order to avoid a two-tier system. Good communication would make it work well.

7. Date of Next Meeting: 6th May 2016