

Cross Party Group on Animal Welfare Meeting

18:00 Tuesday 23rd October 2018

AGM

Present:

MSPs

Christine Grahame MSP (Convener) (CG)
Alison Johnstone MSP
Rona Mackay MSP
Colin Smyth MSP

Attendees

Mauvis Gore	Marine Conservation International
Holly Conway	The Kennel Club
Ed Hayes	The Kennel Club
Dick Morrison	The Scottish Kennel Club
Jamie Stewart	Scottish Countryside Alliance
Julia Stoddart	SACS
Bryn Tennant	SRVC Veterinary Services
Jane Stirling	Napier University
Sue Whittle	Compassion Edinburgh CIWF
John Burns	World Horse Welfare
Kim Ayling	World Horse Welfare
Leanne McPaice	World Horse Welfare
Vicki Betton	PDSA
Charlotte Longster	Dogs Trust
Tracy Lygo	Greyhound Welfare
D.K. Hamilton	Greyhound Welfare
Shona Johnston	Greyhound Welfare
Sara McBride	Advocates for Rabbit Welfare
Karen Gray	Advocates for Rabbit Welfare
Jacqui Cuff	Cats Protection
Elsbeth Stirling	Cats Neutering Petition Scotland
Sulekha Varma	Hamilton Park Racecourse/Scottish Racing
Ross Hamilton	British Horse Racing Authority
Delly Innes	Scottish Racing
Rhona O'Malley	Advocates for Rabbit Welfare
Su Ross	Advocates for Rabbit Welfare
Diane Bain	Observer
Peter McDonald	Horse Rescue Scotland
Patricia Saluja	University of Aberdeen
Becky Thwaites	Blue Cross
Anna Wade	Blue Cross
Caroline Bellinger	Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home
Daisy Page	Battersea Dogs & Cats Home
Mike Flynn	SSPCA
David Woolfries	Stirling Council
Michael Park	Animal Plant Health Agency
Julie Hanna	The British Horse Society Scotland
Jessica Bajda	The British Horse Society Scotland
Zofia Bekas	Observer (University of Edinburgh)
Claudia Flueter	individual (Hospital for Small Animals)
Adam Reed	University of St Andrews
Mike Reynolds	Professional greyhound trainer
Meg Reynolds	Help a Hound
Tricia Colville	British Vet Association & British Small Animal Vet Association
Hazel Peplinski	Perth Racecourse
Gwenda Findlay	Greyhound Welfare

Apologies

Miles Briggs

1. Introductions

The Convener (CG) opened the meeting and invited members to sign in.

2. Apologies

CG noted apologies as listed above.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with one correction:

Michael Park APHA noted that it is illegal to feed venison to salmon, which removed the threat suggested by John Bruce (BDS) of chronic wasting disease in farmed salmon.

4. Nomination of new secretary

Tracy Lygo volunteered and was accepted by CG.

5. Discussion of December's exhibition stand

CG asked that the volunteers to assist with the exhibit apply for security clearance to take part. The theme was a celebration of animals and CG urged CPGAW members to send in images of themselves with their pets or animals. CG also asked that volunteers meet with her on 20th November, 2018 at 18:00 to discuss organisation of the event.

Action Point

- Exhibition stand volunteers to obtain security clearance and to meet with CG on 20th November, 2018 at 18:00

6. Presentations

Three presentations were made:

Racehorse welfare

Ross Hamilton and Sulekha Varma presented information on the economic value of horse racing in Scotland, the improvements in welfare in the sport with fewer fatalities over the years, mechanism for handling breaches in welfare. There is now a 30 day notification (rather than the previous 6 month) requirement for foals born and intended for racing. There are retirement programmes set up to take retired racing horses as well as some re-training programmes.

The betting board funded research into the sport and the RSPCA was associated with the sport. Fence construction is being researched to improve visibility for the horse jumping. Turf safe management research has brought about a fibre sand substrate used at Musselburgh race course. Course design and padded hurdles are being investigated, cooling system for raced horses.

A question on the quality of the life of stallions was discussed and suggested that they have very good conditions for expression of natural behaviours. The remit of the judicial panel is new in British Racing and chaired by a former high court judge and has veterinary expertise on the panel. On the whip, the "air cushion" whip leaves no mark and the number of times a whip can be used is limited per race. It was noted that jockeys appear to have fewer breaches with the lower limit.

Rabbit Welfare Guidance Implementation

Rhona O'Malley outlined the basis of the Edinburgh based charity "Advocates for Rabbit Welfare. The group runs a rabbit neutering scheme, educational events and offers advice on rabbits. They feel that rabbits are often neglected as pets and subject to very poor welfare, this despite the suggestion that rabbits are the third most popular UK pet. There are very few rescue centres and the SSPCA bears part of the burden. Housing is a major issue and the Scottish Parliament guidance on housing was a positive step in resolving this.

Problems in pet rabbit keeping were listed, including very small hutch sizes severely restricting movement and often a lack of shelter, lack of clean substrate and food and water areas due to large amount of excreta often not cleared. Diets were often unsuitable and misguided, leading to health problems such as overgrown teeth, spinal and bladder irregularities. The inappropriate housing restricted expression of natural behaviours and this social breed were often kept singly.

The group aims for an adoption scheme, rescue centre and to work with Pet Plan for neutering pet rabbits.

The group asked for advice on how to best take their plans forward. CG suggested talking to children in schools, although the SSPCA have a programme on this rolled out. It was also suggested that keeping rabbits as pets be added to the school curriculum and that adults needed to be targeted as well. Colin Smyth asked about the legal status of the guidance on minimum housing size but they are enforceable guidelines at present. CG suggested the group write to MSPs for guidance and Vicki Betton suggested meeting with the Pet Shop Body to refine the issue. John Burns suggested that working with a major hutch manufacturer on a suitable hutch and the group endorsing the design would help to guide buyer choice.

Action Point

- Group consider writing to MSP for guidance on housing size regulation.

Greyhound Welfare

Tracy Lygo and Shona Johnston outlined some of the problems associated with greyhound racing. A large number are bred for racing and a large number are euthanised. They suggested that the Greyhound Board of Great Britain's statement that many retired greyhounds are re-homed or retrained is not accurate. The statistics available cover licensed racing tracks but not unlicensed ones. They believe there are anomalies between figures published by GBGB in relation to Greyhound death, injury and Rehoming and those obtained from private rescue. They raised concerns regarding Greyhound Trusts being profit making businesses with private rescues, at their own cost, often left to pick up the pieces with the many dogs needing rehomed. The group expressed concern for the growing number of greyhounds being exported to countries with no welfare laws

There was a suggestion that although doping race dogs occurs, an approach to the SSPCA for assistance was refused. Breeding does not appear to be controlled. The group made clear they opposed the opening of a new Greyhound racing stadium at Wallyford, East Lothian. The group are seeking a complete ban of the sport and asking MSPs for assistance to ensure enforcement of racing rules. CG asked why a complete ban was sought if good animal welfare could be enforced. The group noted that all dogs retired had poor welfare and housing Mike Reynolds (professional greyhound trainer and owner) objected to the suggestion that there was blanket abuse. He suggested contacting the police, the SSPCA and noted that there is a DEFRA booklet on the Care of Racing Greyhounds. Rona Mackay asked Mr. Reynolds if he found the categories for euthanasia in the Retirement Form for GBGB-Registered Greyhounds were acceptable. He replied that there were individual dogs that fell under these categories. A question on the surface of the race track noted that this was sand. Colin Smyth asked for information on Class A drug use for dogs. CG suggested that Mr. Reynolds give a presentation from the owner/manager point of view.

Action Point

- Mike Reynolds to give a presentation on the racing greyhound owners view of the sport.

Greyhound Welfare to contact SSPCA Mike Flynn for clarification on the suggestion that the SSPCA have refused to assist with investigating doping allegations.

7. Future meetings:

Suggested presentation

- Greyhound Racing – Mike Reynolds, professional trainer/owner

Also proposed were

- Shock collars
- Panel of 5 MSPs give an update on animal welfare issued for live animal export and calf future, including the potential effect of BREXIT.

8. AOB

There will be a ticketed meeting on Compassion in Farming on 19th November, 2018, at 17:45 in Stockbridge Library, Edinburgh.

10. Date of next meeting

CG will announce a date for January, 2019, and requested agenda items.