

Cross Party Group on Animal Welfare Meeting

18:00 Tuesday 15th January 2019 (Committee Room 3 – Scottish Parliament)

Attendees

Alison Johnstone MSP (*Deputy Convener*)

Christine Grahame MSP (*Convener*)

Emma Harper MSP

Adam Reed – University of St Andrews

Alison Craig – Edinburgh Napier University

Allan Sim – Canine Concern Scotland

Ann Southwood – Borders Pet Rescue

Becky Thwaites – Blue Cross

Bryn Tennant – SRUC Veterinary Sciences

Caroline Bellinger – Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home

Cathy Dwyer – Jeanne Marchig International Centre for Animal Welfare Education

Charlotte Longster – Dogs Trust

Claudia Fleuter – Hospital for Small Animals

Daisy Page – Battersea Dogs and Cats Home

David Woolfries – Scottish Animal Health Welfare Strategy

Dick Morrison – Scottish Kennel Club

Ed Hayes – The Kennel Club

Elsbeth Stirling

Emma McKenzie – MSP Staff (*temporary secretary*)

Erika Feilberg – British Veterinary Nursing Association

Glenda Findlay – Welfare for Greyhounds

Helene Mauchlen – British Horse Society (Scotland)

James Reynolds (Greyhound trainer)

John Burns – World Horse Welfare

Karen Gray - Advocates for Rabbit Welfare

Kay Hamilton

Leanne McPake - World Horse Welfare

Lee-Ann Lackie – Borders Pet Rescue

Libby Anderson – OneKind

Lindsay Findlay – Welfare for Greyhounds

Marjorie Delaney - Horse Rescue Scotland

Meg Reynolds – Help a Hound

Mike Flynn – SSPCA

Mike Radford – University of Aberdeen

Mike Reynolds (Professional greyhound trainer)

Morgan Brobyn – Battersea Dogs and Cats Home

Patricia Saluja – University of Aberdeen

Pete Ritchie – Nourish Scotland

Peter MacDonald – Horse Rescue Scotland

Rhona O'Malley – Advocate for Rabbit Welfare

Romain Pizzi (Veterinarian)

Sara McBride – Advocates for Rabbit Welfare

Seonaig Johnston – Greyhound Welfare

Tricia Colville – British Veterinary Association and British Small Animal Veterinary Association

Zofia Bekas – HFSA/ University of Edinburgh

Apologies

Rona Mackay MSP

Cats Protection
Charles Everitt - UK National Wildlife Crime Unit
Colin Sheddon – BASC
Elizabeth Ormerod
Howard Bridges – Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home
Jamie Stewart – Countryside Alliance
Jane Stirling
John Bruce - British Deer Society
John F. Robins - Animal Concern Advice Line
Kirsteen Mackenzie - Perth and Kinross Council
Sue Whittle

1. Welcome and Introductions

Convener welcomed the group and introduced it to new attendees, outlining its purpose.

2. Apologies

Noted that apologies had been received and were available to view

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Amendments were suggested and accepted. Convener noted that minutes are not an official report and will provide an outline of the meeting rather than all statements made.

4. Cross party working group on live export of dairy calves

CG gave an update on the work of herself (SNP) and Findlay Carson MSP (Con), Colin Smyth MSP (Lab), Mark Ruskell MSP (GRN) and Mike Rumbles MSP (LD) who are meeting as a group to discuss how best to minimise live exports and at birth slaughter of male dairy calves. CG emphasised the need for cross party work on this and that animal welfare should not be party political.

They have met with Quality Meat Scotland to discuss the possibility of the male calves being reared for rose veal wherein they are reared for two years in the fields (a separate product to white veal which is crated). Learned from QMS that there is a shortage of beef being produced in Scotland to meet demand so there is not an issue of competition with existing beef farmers. Group is now looking to meet with NFUS to discuss farmers challenges around this.

A number of members raised concerns about instances of calves being transported under age or for time periods in violation of current regulations. A specific example was discussed concerning a shipment from Castle Douglas which Emma Harper agreed to look into this, as it is in her region, if details could be sent to her.

Members raised concerns that actions should be urgent and something should be done at the present time on behalf of the group to express concerns. Convener agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy to raise concerns and request a statement on the alleged violations of regulations if members could send a briefing. Emma Harper agreed to put a motion down noting concerns to draw parliamentary attention to the issue.

5. Shock Collars

Ed Hayes from the Kennel Club gave an update on their campaign work for a ban of electronic shock collars. Following a consultation ministerial guidance was issued by the Scottish Government, however the Kennel Club is concerned the guidance is hard to enforce as it must be proven the animal suffered pain and distress. The Kennel Club and other welfare organisations continue to engage with the Scottish Government on this and would like to see secondary legislation brought in to ban shock collars under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. Current position is that the Scottish Government has committed to reviewing the efficacy of the guidance after 12 months (October 2019).

6. Presentation by Mike Reynolds, James Reynolds and Meg Reynolds on welfare within greyhound racing

Mike Reynolds (greyhound trainer) introduced himself and his brother James Reynolds (greyhound trainer) and daughter Meg Reynolds (Help a Hound), giving background on the Reynolds long history in greyhound racing and drawing attention to a reference given by a vet attesting to high standards of dog welfare in Reynolds' Orchard Kennels.

James Reynolds gave a presentation on his work in the industry but due to technical issues with sound equipment was unable to play two short films he had prepared on this (stated that these films can be sent on request to members wishing to view them). Instead gave a verbal overview, emphasising his own commitment to dog welfare and the care given to racing greyhounds. Stated that Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) tests for doping have shown negligible levels of positive results with a low level of animals being euthanised, that GBGB inspections are more rigorous than equivalent inspections carried out by local authorities and that movements of racing greyhounds are tightly regulated with kennel books required to show a full record of dogs kept.

Outlined a number of initiatives that GBGB are working on, including improving sport surface, securing UK government funding for the sport, part funding vet fees of racing dogs, investing in rehoming schemes and continuing to strengthen its anti-doping schemes.

Noted that there has been a decline in the number of racing stadiums but an increase in races ran at existing stadiums, representing a growth sport. Explained that income from the betting sector to greyhound racing is on a voluntary basis and that there is a view within the sport that that there should be a compulsory levy brought in to ensure a share of the profits from betting.

James Reynolds and Mike Reynolds reiterated their position that their dogs are athletes and that they receive exceptional healthcare as a result as trainers do not want their dogs to be injured, they want them to race.

Meg Reynolds explained her work with Help a Hound which seeks to rehome retired racing greyhounds. She emphasised that her experience is that dogs have come into her care from trainers with a high standard of welfare and that anyone receiving retired dogs who are not in this condition should ensure it is reported to GBGB and the SSPCA to ensure it is investigated.

The presentation was then opened up to questions by members.

Members raised and discussed a number of specific incidents where they believed dogs had been subject to abuse or were retired from racing in a bad state and rehomed without proper checks being made. It was raised that these incidences had been reported to GBGB but no action appeared to have been taken. Convener suggested inviting GBGB to a future meeting to answer questions directly and members agreed.

Alison Johnstone noted there was clearly a diverse range of views and noted her view that she disagreed with the characterisation of dogs as athletes as they did not themselves make the choice to race and asked what actions the Reynolds were taking or felt should be taken regarding those trainers who fall short of the standards they referred to, particularly where greyhounds may end up unaccounted for or in countries with lower welfare standards. James Reynolds responded that he believed welfare had improved massively since the seventies and that most examples of bad treatment were from other countries or historic. Regarding greyhounds choice to race stated that their dogs exhibited enthusiasm and positive behaviour towards racing.

Members raised concerns about the length of time racing greyhounds could be kennelled for in a day. Reynolds stated this was not what happens, although SSPCA stated they had seen the best and worst of kennels and there were incidences at other kennels where dogs were kennelled for 23 hours a day or where serious abuses had been recorded. SSPCA clarified that there are two racing tracks in Scotland – Shawfield which is GBGB registered and Thornton which is not (known as a “flapper track”). Convener queried whether it would be useful to write to the Scottish Government to ask what measures were been taken to ensure welfare at this flapper track, members agreed and SSPCA agreed to send information to facilitate this.

Members raised concerns about what happens when dogs can no longer race or where dogs are bred that do not have a talent for racing, noting reports of dogs going missing. Reynolds responded that vast majority of pups born will race but those who do not are rehomed as pets and Meg Reynolds explained her work rehoming retired greyhounds. Reynolds reinforced their view that trainers and owners want the best for their dogs and are in the sport for a love of it. Convener noted that her proposed member's bill (Responsible Dog Ownership) seeks to bring in regulations about registering all dogs born and reducing the permitted number of litters born in a year from 5 to 3 which would also cover racing greyhound breeders.

Members noted there had been questions about whether racing greyhounds were included in new Scottish Government legislation on Circus Animals and that clarification would need to be sought.

Convener drew presentation to a close and thanked all taking part for their civil tone in a polarising and impassioned debate.

7. AOB

Convener raised that she had been contacted regarding concerns about the welfare of laying hens. The group agreed to discuss this at a future meeting.

Convener noted the parliamentary exhibition which had been held by the group had been successful and members agreed they would like to do it again when possible.

Discussion regarding Scottish Government's approach to dog welfare, convener drew attention to the Ministerial Statement on Animal Welfare on 9th January 2019 which answered some of these questions (available on the official report on the Scottish Parliament's website).

Meeting concluded 8pm

8. Actions agreed

- Convener to write to Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy to ask for a response to recent ongoing breaches of live export regulations – members to send details to facilitate this
- Emma Harper MSP to look into alleged breaches of live export regulations in her constituency – members to send details
- Emma Harper MSP to submit a motion noting ongoing concerns about live export
- Convener to write to minister about steps being taken to ensure welfare at Thornton ("flapper") greyhound track
- Clarification to be sought as to whether circus animals legislation covers racing greyhounds
- GBGB to be invited to make a presentation at a future meeting
- Welfare of laying hens to be discussed at a future meeting