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.