

Report of the UK Advisory Council on the welfare issues of dog breeding: summary of progress since The Bateson Report of 2010

Published at the end of December 2014, this Report gives a final review and summary of all the UK Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding, and others, have achieved over the four years of its existence. Established in 2010, following a recommendation by the Independent Inquiry into Dog Breeding chaired by Professor Sir Patrick Bateson (see R&C, *Animal Welfare* [19:2] 2010), the key role of this Council was envisaged by Bateson to be ‘...to develop evidence-based breeding strategies that address the issues of poor conformation, inherited disease and inbreeding as appropriate to the specific breed and to provide advice on the priorities for research and development in these areas.’

Rather than focusing on progress against this individual recommendation, this Report instead opts for a broader view and is structured so that general progress made, and actions taken, are measured against each of the fourteen Bateson recommendations. Further detail is contained within seven Appendices, which collect some of the other various reports on progress, guidance and recommendations previously issued by the Council. Recommendations for future action are also given.

In her foreword, chairman Professor Sheila Crispin indicates that whilst the Council feel that progress has been made against some of the Bateson recommendations, highlighting, amongst others, the introduction of compulsory microchipping for all dogs, the production of a Puppy Contract for those selling and buying dogs and the modification of (some) Kennel Club breed standards, there are areas that still need addressing. This is perhaps not unexpected given that the Council has no statutory powers and is working in an area with many diverse stakeholders who have different interests, motivations and priorities.

One of the areas where further work is needed relates to Recommendation 4 of the Bateson Report, which called for upgrading of the existing UK Kennel Club (KC) accredited breeder scheme, and if this could not be agreed, the introduction of a new independent standard for breeding dogs. Accordingly, the Council produced their own standard and then began discussions with the Kennel Club as to how their breeder scheme could be amended to match this. Complete agreement between the two has still to be reached, although the Kennel Club have revised elements of their scheme and now achieved UKAS accreditation. The Report indicates that the points of disagreement that remain between the two schemes/standards are only small and not necessarily insuperable. In the recommendations for further action, the Council sees the next challenge as encouraging the

take up of a single standard by breeders of both purebred and crossbred dogs alike.

Progress has been least in those of the Bateson recommendations that relate to statutory regulation (Recommendations 6, 8 and 10). Whilst the Council produced and submitted advice to Government on the regulation of the breeding, supply, sale and advertising for sale of dogs and offered to produce a Code of Practice based upon its ‘Standard for Breeding Dogs’ (both detailed in the Appendices), no action on either has been taken by Defra, the concerned UK Government ministry, despite their initial expressions of interest. In addition, amendments tabled by this ministry to a Deregulation Bill (aimed at streamlining and simplifying existing legislation) proposed removing requirements for record-keeping by dog breeders; requirements that the Council regard as essential. This has meant that discrepancies and omissions now exist between different parts of UK legislation, between that that deals specifically with the breeding of dogs and licensing of breeding establishments and more recently introduced regional Animal Welfare Acts.

As its last act, the Council lists eight areas it sees as priorities for future actions. In the first of these it notes that ‘considerable confusion’ remains about the ‘best means of delivering informed independent advice in relation to dog health and welfare’. The Council’s recommendation therefore is a formal review of the situation, eg through reconstituting the Dog Welfare Review Board or a similar grouping of key stakeholders. It sees that the key to success in this is reciprocal stakeholder collaboration.

Another is the establishment of a Trust Fund by the Council to support research connected with the collection of canine prevalence data, particularly in relation to those conditions with the greatest impact on quality of life. The Fund will be administered by trustees drawn from members of the Council — details of whom can be found on their website: <http://www.dogadvisorycouncil.com>.

A final action point is that the Working Group addressing the issues of selection for extremes of conformation should continue, and this it will — with funding provided by the RSPCA and under the chair of Advisory Council member, Dr David Sargan.

Summary of Progress since the Bateson Report of 2010 (December 2014). A4, 100 pages. Report Of The Advisory Council On The Welfare Issues Of Dog Breeding. Available at: <http://cavaliercampaign.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Advisory-Council-Final-Report.pdf>.

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