

**National Assembly for Wales All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW)**  
**Annual Conference 27 July 2004**

**In attendance:**

Chair, Lorraine Barrett AM (Lab, Cardiff South and Penarth)  
Claire Lawson, RSPCA Cymru Wales  
Sally Horn, Animal Aid  
Fran Trevett, Dogs Trust  
Sian Edwards, Dogs Trust  
Rachael Bartlett, Pit Pony Sanctuary  
Roy Peckham, Pit Pony Sanctuary  
Rebecca Seven, League Against Cruel Sports  
Norman Brown, International League for the Protection of Horses  
Phillip Jones, International League for the Protection of Horses  
Suzanne Campbell, Protection of Wild Animals  
John Campbell, Protection of Wild Animals  
Sarah Marsh, Greyhound Rescue Wales  
Alain Thomas, Greyhound Rescue Wales  
Wendy Davies, British Horse Society  
Huw Jones, Head of Branch, Animal & Plant Health Policy Division, Welsh Assembly Government  
Rt Hon Alun Michael MP (Lab, Cardiff South and Penarth)  
Secretariat: Rhian Jones and Sara Jones, Morgan Allen Moore Cymru

**Item 1: Greyhound Presentation introduced by Rebecca Seven, the League Against Cruel Sports**

Ms Seven noted that the League Against Cruel Sports had been established eighty years ago with the primary aim of campaigning against hunting. However the league is now looking at other cruel sports.

The following points were made during the presentation:

- Greyhound racing 'cannot continue as it is'. The welfare of the greyhound too often appears to be a minor concern within a £2.1 billion industry.
- The League is not campaigning for an outright ban, and has identified a number of areas where they believe welfare can be improved. These include:
  - Before the greyhound's racing career; it is suggested that breeders are registered, along with all greyhounds born so that their lives can be monitored.
  - During the greyhound's racing career to look at the minor injuries incurred during racing, standardising the radii of all tracks to 80.
  - The League would like to see independent vets present at all races.
  - It calls for track and kennel conditions to be monitored.
  - Of the 10,000 greyhounds who retire from racing across UK each year only 2,500 are known to be rehomed by greyhound welfare groups.
- In relation to the current situation, voluntary contributions by the greyhound industry have increased from 0.4% of turnover to 0.5%. This will rise to 0.6% by 2006. This will probably not affect all the independent tracks, as they are not governed by the NGRC. The League welcomes this increase but note that they have no guarantee that it will go to welfare improvements.
- Consequently, the League has approached the industry requesting the money be used to employ an independent vet at all races, to guarantee proper provision for greyhounds that do not make the grade or are retired and to bring independent tracks up to a standard that ensures good racing animal welfare.
- Annex H of the supporting documents alongside the draft Animal Welfare Bill contains a proposal to register kennels at dog tracks. The Annex suggests the potential to have Code

- of Practice enforced by local authorities, including vet to be at all race meetings. Self-regulation by NGRC to include non-NGRC tracks is suggested.
- Secondary legislation is not planned until the end of the decade – the League does not believe this delay is acceptable as it endangers tens of thousands more dogs.
  - The Bill does not make reference to mass humane killing, nor does it mention the need for provisions to be made regarding rehoming mentioned in the Bill or support material.
  - The League is campaigning for a change in the Gambling Bill so that it includes a levy on bookmakers to pay for greyhound welfare.
  - The issue of greyhound welfare has been raised a number of times in the House of Commons and approximately 250 MPs have put their name to an EDM calling for improved welfare for greyhounds.
  - William Hill the Bookmakers have agreed to increase their payments towards animal welfare.
  - The League recommended that APGAW write to Ben Bradshaw from a Welsh perspective on the issues raised.

### **APGAW Comments**

Alain Thomas noted that he was pleased to see the League taking a greater interest in greyhound racing. He welcomed the understanding shown by the private sector and the independent tracks in Wales and noted that Greyhound Rescue Wales is currently consulting with regards a response to the Animal Welfare Bill

Lorraine Barrett AM stated that following a productive and positive visit to the Swansea track, she recalled the significant fundraising for charities that was conducted at the track. She feels that this fundraising activity should be extended to greyhound welfare/rescue agencies.

Alain Thomas noted that a constructive dialogue had been established with the independent tracks and a general commitment developed with the industry to work with rescue agencies and to explore each other's positions.

Philip Jones questioned whether tracks have vets on call. In response Sarah Campbell noted that if the dog is injured it is up to the owner to take it to the vet. She added that she had seen dogs being 'stitched up' by their owners rather than having a vet called. Rebecca Seven commented that it is important to have an educational campaign to address these issues.

Alain Thomas noted that Greyhound Rescue is minded towards local authority licensing rather than NGRC regulation, although this would mean greater costs for the local authorities. Suzanne Campbell felt that there should be a levy on race entrance fees to ensure that a vet is on site as well as adequate security. Rebecca Seven added that the League feels vets should be independently employed by the track.

The level of greyhound betting in Wales was discussed.

### **Item 2: The Draft Animal Welfare Bill**

Claire Lawson provided an update on the Draft Animal Welfare Bill, noting that it was an enabling bill which the Assembly will be issuing for consultation. Mrs Lawson recommended that a letter summarising APGAW's response to the Bill should be sent to Ben Bradshaw, Minister for Nature Conservation and Fisheries.

Assembly official Huw Jones provided an overview of remit of the Animal Welfare and ID Branch and the work it undertakes implementing the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy and the Draft Animal Welfare Bill. He noted that there had been reorganisation within the departments working under the portfolio of the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside, Mr Carwyn Jones.

Mr Huw Jones made the following points in relation to the Animal Welfare Bill:

- The Bill will provide for non-farmed animals what, in many ways, is being achieved for the farmed animal. There is greater emphasis on the non-farmed animal side in the Bill.
- The Bill will be an England/Wales Bill but key elements can be constructed on an all Wales basis. As such the department will look closely at codes of practice as they affect Wales.
- It is also possible that different timescales can be adhered to in Wales.
- All the issues considered are a matter of legislative priority for the Assembly.
- It will be necessary to work with DEFRA in constructing the code of conduct and then adapt this to Wales as to the views of stakeholder groups.
- The Welsh Assembly Government department will be receptive and responsive. It was suggested that Group members write to both Ben Bradshaw and Carwyn Jones. It is likely that the Bill will go out to consultation in Wales in October this year, as such it will be necessary to work and influence where possible.
- Once the Bill has been approved a codes of practice will be developed. There will be many opportunities to influence the content of the codes.
- In terms of non-farmed animals there is likely to be little difference between England and Wales.
- It will be necessary to consult across the board in the hope is that a consensus will be developed.
- The code of practice under the Animal Welfare Bill will have statutory implications.

### **APGAW Comments**

A discussion was had as to the role of inspectors as identified in the Bill. Huw Jones replied that the issue of who will be an inspector would not form part of the Bill and would rather be part of a code of practice. Wendy Davies felt that local authorities were 'particularly hard pushed' to put in place inspectors. She noted that inspectors with knowledge of welfare and the law were needed. Roy Peckham recommended that independent people are appointed as inspectors. Anecdotal evidence was noted of vets being threatened and intimidated at race tracks. Sarah March highlighted the case of Dyfed Powys Police who have invited lay inspectors to undertake inspectorate work for minimum expenses.

Wendy Davies felt that stud farms should fall under the same licensing as liveries and riding stables. In relation to the movement of animals, it was argued that questions should arise as to whether 'the security is in place on this issue'. She added that there are 120 stud farms in Wales, if not more, and there is uncertainty as to whether any have a quality assurance stamp on them. In terms of movement of animals, Roy Peckham queried the licensing of dealers yards.

Philip Jones queried the classification of horses, as horses are neither classed as farm animal or pet. Huw Jones felt that in this sense they could certainly try and influence the Bill although he was unsure as to the effect this would have on codes of practice. Claire Lawson noted that if you class a horse as a pet then you would have to increase the age at which horses can be bought and sold.

Sally Horn raised concern over animal sanctuaries and the proposal to split classification between small and large. Ms Horn added that the smaller sanctuaries have fewer regulations although, in her opinion, these are the ones where standards are lapsing and there is not enough supervision.

Alain Thomas felt the Bill offered scope for imaginative thinking on these issues and that there should be requirements for more investigations/inspections. He noted that the WCVA recommended that inspections be held by people who have received training and suggested that a similar scheme should be explored here. He added that guidance and advice would be required prior to any enforcement. Ms Horn responded that the problem here is that not all sanctuaries were charities and as such how would some come under the inspection regulations if not registered.

Claire Lawson noted that the issue is that of the definition of a sanctuary. Rebecca Seven added that the Bill touches on this in relation to wild animals and that a number of the League's holdings are not classed as sanctuaries. Sally Horn felt that when people advertise their sanctuary publicly this should mean it is classed as a sanctuary. Lorraine Barrett AM felt that a sanctuary should be thought of as a place of safety, if they are rehoming then they should not be classed as a sanctuary. Claire Lawson added that there is an issue of duty of care.

Alain Thomas raised the Bill's inclusion of tethering of horses and added that there is also an issue with regards the tethering of dogs. Claire Lawson replied that this comes under the duty of care and that there is focus on the tethering of horses due to the recent campaign on this issue.

John Campbell highlighted the large amount of responsibility in the Bill placed on the non-statutory body, the RSPCA, which has a lack of resources. Mr Campbell noted that DEFRA has the ability to take control of horses when they are under agricultural purpose.

Sarah Marsh questioned whether there was any intention to cover the aspect of transportation of greyhounds. Wendy Davies asked whether, in terms of scientific research (clause 3), where you have units running animal science degrees how well are these regulated. Claire Lawson noted she had been told by the RSPCA science department that they are heavily regulated although she had had heard anecdotal evidence from others that this is not the case.

#### **Discussion on the Animal Welfare Bill continued after lunch**

Claire Lawson noted that, with regards the RSPCA's resources; there will be an increase in initial areas of work but, as the codes of practice are rolled out, it is anticipated that this will diminish in the future.

Philip Jones highlighted the issue of the abandonment of dogs found on common ground. Suzanne Campbell also queried who would accept responsibility if people pick up animals that are sick, she added that those who pick up the animal are often then responsible and would be expected to pay the bill. Claire Lawson noted that, in terms of the RSPCA, there are too many variables to consider in that local resources vary between different branches.

Sarah Marsh stated that a vet has a duty of care for an animal if it is under his care. Problems can arise at greyhound tracks as a vet may be present but the owner chooses not to have the dog treated. The dog is not, in this context, therefore under the care of the vet. John Campbell noted that the vet is there to make a judgement as to whether an animal needs to be put down. Claire Lawson added that ensuring that the animal is taken for treatment is the problem currently faced.

Wendy Davies raised the topic of trotting races and noted that in the trotting scene in Wales the vet's word is law and they are very strict in this respect. Lorraine Barrett AM questioned whether the fraternity had regulated itself. Mrs Davies felt that this was the case and that she was very pleased with the ample veterinary support that was available at trotting races.

Lorraine Barrett AM questioned the prevalence of circuses under the new Bill. Claire Lawson noted that only when it becomes economically un-viable for circuses to keep animals might the practice cease. Mrs Lawson added that despite a well received cross party parliamentary report calling on banning circus animals the situation remains the same.

Alain Thomas felt that the Group needed to be clear that the new legislation applied to sanctuaries. He noted the current 'tiers' in relation to larger and smaller sanctuaries and suggested that there should be constituted and un-constituted sanctuaries. Mr Thomas added that it needs to be in their interest to 'make their organisations known'. Wendy Davies felt that the word 'sanctuary' needs to be reviewed as 'rehabilitation' is a completely different concept. Roy

Peckham stated that the problem arises when some organisations offer both a rehabilitation and sanctuary service. It was felt best to avoid 'pigeonholing' and try and come up with a methodology such as the number of animals cared for per year. John Campbell felt that definitions were not always helpful and that maybe Mr Peckham's idea should be utilised. Claire Lawson added that it was DEFRA's responsibility to have had some definition of sanctuaries in the Bill in the first place.

The problem of profit and not-for-profit sanctuaries was raised. Claire Lawson stated that by right all should be not for profit. Sarah Marsh noted that some places charge to re-home, others receive donations and that 'this is a play on words'. Claire Lawson felt that DEFRA must be able to construct a definition. Once a definition is given then the Group can scrutinise and offer suggestions.

### **Item 3: AOB**

- The APGAW Assembly Reception is scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2005.
- Norman Brown felt the Group should look at standardisation issues in dealing with 'stray animal' enquiries.
- John Campbell suggested the Group look at CAP reform and how this will apply to farmers in Wales. Claire Lawson noted that Assembly official, Margaret Griffiths has agreed to speak to the Group on this issue.
- Roy Peckham raised this issue of fundraising opportunities and how the Group could try and interest people in attending meetings.

### **Item 4: Discussion with the Rt Hon Alun Michael MP**

Alun Michael welcomed the Animal Welfare Bill noting that it was a very big step forward for animal welfare and an opportunity for people to say how they felt on this issue. He added that it was a very flexible piece of legislation.

The Minister of State for Rural Affairs and Local Environmental Quality raised the following points in his presentation to the Group:

- DEFRA, the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament are looking at the future of the equine industry and there is currently much activity and engagement with all stakeholders.
- The Ragwort Act is now in place and this is a good example of co-operation. The Private Members Bill was written in co-operation with the British Horse Society. The response system has also been altered; the basis of an inspection is to give a warning in the first instance.
- The European Commission has failed to reach agreement on horses in transit. The UK has led on this issue followed by the Scandinavian countries. Less enthusiasm has been shown by Italy and France. Concern was expressed that with EU enlargement accession states would be unlikely to support an agreement on the welfare of horses in transit. As such the UK pushed for an agreement during the Irish presidency but this was unsuccessful.
- The current approach on the issue of horses in transit is to focus on better enforcement of existing legislations across Europe, particularly in Poland and Hungary.
- The RSPCA and ILPH have both been in contact with Mr Michael in relation to the issue of horse passports. Their concern is that the number of slaughterhouses will close and horses will then be illegally disposed at the end of their lives.
- The present horse passports are completed by an authorised person and include a diagram noting the horse's characteristics. Organisations will be encouraged to view micro chipping of horses as a definite possibility for the future. Rather than establish a new Government agency to issue passports, the current system already in place for breeding and record purposes will be extended.

- It takes time for legislative change to be put in place. The possibility of the creation of a database has been raised. A company is being established, jointly owned by industry and DEFRA, to run the database.
- In relation to hunting with dogs, the Prime Minister stated at the time of the Queen's Speech last year that this issue will be dealt with within this parliament and that remains the case.

### **APGAW Comment**

- In response to a comment by John Campbell on hunting, Alun Michael noted that he was working on the understanding that this issue will be discussed and resolved during this parliament.
- Following a question by Philip Jones on horse passports, Alun Michael noted that vets will be central to the enforcement of this system.
  - At the end of the horse's life the passport must be produced at the slaughter house.
  - When a vet is called to administer or provide medicine a passport is required.
  - In the movement and sale of horses a passport again should be required.
- Wendy Davies raised the issue of the rising cost of insurance premiums for riding schools. Alun Michael noted that he hosted a meeting with the British Insurance Association and British Horse Society representatives to discuss this issue and try to identify solutions. He noted that the problem stems from the fact that 'we live in an increasingly litigious society'. There are only a small group of companies who are willing to insure riding schools due to the high risk they pose. The Minister stated that this is becoming a bigger burden for business.
- Sarah Marsh queried the authorisation process in issuing horse passports. In response Alun Michael noted that if it is not the vet then it has to be a member of the passport issuing authority. In relation to the transfer, the onus is on the owner to ensure that the sale is reported.
- Roy Peckham stated that there could potentially be an issue over deciphering horse markings. Alun Michael stated that there will always be some people who try to cheat the system. He added that there is no system at present and therefore a passport is a step forward from having no system at all.
- Rebecca Seven noted that members of her organisation were 'getting jittery' on the timing of the hunting bill. She questioned whether members should put aside the second week of September for the enabling act of Parliament to be passed. In response Alun Michael stated that the Government will deliver on its promise.

### **Dates for the Diary**

APGAW Meeting: 2 November 2004, 7 December 2004.

APGAW Reception: 25 January 2005