

National Assembly for Wales All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) Meeting
29 June 2004

In attendance:

Chair, Lorraine Barrett AM (Lab, Cardiff South and Penarth)
Claire Lawson, RSPCA Cymru Wales, APGAW Secretariat
Roy Peckham, Fforest Uchaf Pit Pony Sanctuary
Alain Thomas, Greyhound Rescue Wales
Leslie Thomas, Greyhound Rescue Wales
Robert Witherall, Gwent Police
Phillip Jones, International League for the Protection of Horses
Michael Sharratt, Badger Watch and Rescue, Dyfed
Mickey Davenport, Badger Watch and Rescue, Dyfed
Sian Edwards, Dogs Trust
Wendy Davies, British Horse Society
Secretariat: Rhian Jones and Dylan Bowen, Morgan Allen Moore Cymru

Item 1: Chair's Welcome and Introduction

Apologies were received from Mick Bates AM and Jocelyn Davies AM. Lorraine Barrett AM welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that there would be two updates; one on Bovine TB and Badgers and the other on greyhounds.

Item 2: Update – Bovine TB and Badgers introduced by Michael Sharratt, Badger Watch and Rescue Dyfed (BWRD)

Mr Sharratt reflected on a meeting he had with the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside, Mr Carwyn Jones AM on 23 March 2004. He thanked the Chair for arranging this meeting, and noted that belonging to APGAW had certainly made a difference in securing the meeting. He added that it had been a constructive meeting and noted that the Minister is committed to tackling Bovine TB. Mr Jones indicated that he would be acting on all available evidence before making his decision on the best way forward for Wales.

The following points were made by the BWRD representative:

- The Godfrey Report, published at the end of March, argues that little value will come from the Krebs trial and that DEFRA should devise a TB policy on the assumption that badgers give TB to cattle. The BWRD's disagrees with this view.
- The BAPW has received legal advice that if the Welsh Assembly Government ordered a cull before the Krebs trial was completed, the Bern Convention could be applied or judicial review sought for unreasonable behaviour.
- Three meetings organized by the Welsh Assembly Government were recently held across Wales; all stakeholders were invited to discuss and comment on the DEFRA report '*Preparing for a GB Strategy on Bovine Tuberculosis*'. These meetings were 'very open' and constructive.
- Attitudes have gradually changed over the past thirty years with ideas on transmission of the disease no longer being solely focused on badgers but on animal movements and stock rearing.
- UK Government Minister, Ben Bradshaw has stated that he is not willing to kill any badgers on the present evidence.
- In response to a question by the Chair about animal health powers, it was noted that the Welsh Assembly Government has the powers to act independently of Westminster on this issue.
- It was noted that a new information forum for badger groups in Wales has been established.
- Encouraging figures have been cited which show that instances of Bovine TB have dropped by 14% , due in part to the restrictions in animal movements during the foot and mouth crisis.

- A paper on the emerging conclusions of the Environment, Planning and Countryside Inquiry into Bovine Tuberculosis was presented to Assembly members on 23rd of June 2004. They were as follows:
 - To take immediate action to tackle Bovine TB in Wales, working in partnership with all stakeholders
 - Establish an 'Intensive Treatment Area' within a TB hotspot in Wales investigating all cattle movements
 - Establish a Wales TB Action Group to deliver short-term measures to tackle TB in cattle and to investigate longer-term measures. Membership of the Action Group would be small, but representative of stakeholders

APGAW Comments

- Following a suggestion by BWRD, it was decided that APGAW submit its name for inclusion as a stakeholder in the Wales TB Action Group. The Chair noted her wish that BWRD would represent APGAW on the TB Action Group.

Item 3: Greyhound Rescue Wales (GRW) Presentation: Alain Thomas, Leslie Thomas

- Following the report on 'The Fate of Racing Greyhounds and Working Lurchers in Wales, October 2003, prepared under the auspices of the Welsh Assembly All Party Group on Animal Welfare (APGAW) and with the assistance of the RSPCA much progress has been made.
- The Wales Greyhound Forum was established following the launch of the APGAW report. It brings together representatives of organisations seeking to improve the welfare of greyhounds such as APGAW, RSPCA, Dogs Trust, Greyhound Rescue Wales and the three independent tracks operating in Wales and another in Elsmere Port in England.
- The first meeting was held on 26th of January 2004 at Swansea.
- The following points arose from that meeting:
 - The need to encourage tracks to improve conditions and have a vet 'on call'
 - Build relationship with tracks
 - Ask all greyhound racing owners to co-operate in setting up a complete record system in order that all racing dogs are identified and more data is available on dogs
 - Develop co-operation between rescue organisations so they can take more greyhounds when they retire
- GRW representatives met with managers from Valley Stadium, Ystrad Mynach on Thursday 29th of April and Bedwellty Tuesday 4th of May. Track managers were supportive and wish to co-operate in the developing a register. It was also evident that the incidents of abuse and neglect noted in the GRW figures are in fact less than accurate and the situation is more serious than was thought with regard to the disposal of unwanted greyhounds on track.
- GRW representatives have since attended Valley Stadium on a regular basis, organising raffles and have talking to a number of race-goers with the encouraging result that people offering information and money to the cause.
- As an example of the need to further work in this area, Alain Thomas noted that a race-goer at Valley Stadium said last week that he loves greyhounds far too much to give them to the organisations to re-home. He would rather they be put down by the vet.
- The process of developing relationships with the tracks has been greatly affected by the discovery of a greyhound dog, shot through the head and with its ears cut off, but still alive on Sunday 2 May. The dog was found on the Fochriw Mountain in the Rhumney Valley, close to both the Bedwellty and Valley tracks.
- As a result of this 'shockwaves went through South Wales greyhound community' and all three tracks have signed a 'Declaration of Intent' to work through Wales Greyhound Forum to prevent any further 'improper killing' of greyhounds.
- GRW's regular presence at tracks has developed much better face to face relations with the 'greyhound fraternity' and as such information sharing and gathering has improved.

- Between one hundred and three hundred greyhounds are shot in South Wales each year and many registered dogs are being disposed of for a price of around £20 in Bedwellty and reports of £5 in Swansea. The GRW is keen to expose the 'underside of greyhound racing' in South Wales and has some of the names of the people involved. The GRW has had much publicity on this issue both in the local press and in the media.
- A further meeting has been arranged with the three tracks on the 14th of July where the following proposals will be put forward:
 - Keeping proper records with the full names and addresses of owners together with a full description of their dogs
 - Creating a 'Wales Greyhound Rescue Network to offer an alternative to inhumane destruction
 - Subsidised Euthanasia Scheme for greyhounds who are severely injured or cannot be safely re-homed because of their temperament
 - Information leaflet encouraging good practice for greyhound owners

APGAW Comments

Chair of APGAW, Lorraine Barrett AM (Lab, Cardiff South & Penarth) warmly applauded progress achieved to date. She noted that co-operation and engagement with the tracks was the group's approach with the welfare of the dogs being the main priority.

Claire Lawson, RSPCA extended, on behalf of her organisation her thanks to GRW for their professional input and noted that she is hopefully of a successful prosecution of those responsible for the death of the dog in Fochriw.

Bob Witherall, Gwent Police gave an example that by law, if you kill an animal outright this is not covered by legislation, as unnecessary suffering cannot be proved.

Claire Lawson, RSPCA stated that the Greyhound Rescue Wales had inputted into the Animal Welfare Bill as did the RSPCA, and added that both organisations held the same views on the Bill. She noted that the Bill is well overdue and has been promised for publication before the end of the Westminster Summer recess. APGAW sent their submission 18 months ago to the first consultation on the Bill. There will be another consultation on the Bill. Concern was expressed at the rumours that it is likely to be an 'enabling bill', setting out guidelines for stakeholders and will therefore not be as strong as regular bills.

Wendy Davies, British Horse Society expressed concern for the psychological state of some dogs who are re-homed following first hand experience of this with dog owning friends. Sian Edwards, Dogs Trust offered to put together a briefing pack on the re-homing of greyhounds. Alain Thomas, Greyhound Rescue Wales expressed the need to cascade information to stakeholders and support organisations who re-home greyhounds. He noted that most dogs adjust but some need additional care and attention. Wendy Davies, British Horse Society suggested that people need to be mentored in this role.

Chair of APGAW, Lorraine Barrett AM (Lab, Cardiff South & Penarth) noted that the GRW presentation was very informative and positive. She encouraged APGAW to continue working on this issue.

Item 4: Other Matters

Gwent Police and Wildlife Crime Officers

Bob Witherall, Gwent Police spoke about his role as Crime Prevention Officer for Gwent Police and force wildlife crime officer co-ordinator Mr Witherall noted that some wildlife officers engage more fully with local groups than others and that this is something that Gwent Police is actively encouraging.

Ragwort Action Week

Wendy Davies, British Horse Society noted that her organisation has chosen Royal Welsh Week (18 July – 25 July) as Ragwort Action Week, under the campaign slogan '*Have you pulled lately?*' She noted that in 2002 there were 208 cases of liver failure in horses recorded by vets. She clarified that this also affects sheep, cattle and people and that ragwort is very prevalent in certain parts of Wales. Wendy Davies explained that the ragwort campaign leaflet was not bilingual and sought advice with regard to translation costs. Morgan Allen Moore will liaise with the Welsh Language Board and provide a briefing note with advice on this issue. It was agreed that APGAW chair, Lorraine Barrett AM will write to the Country Landowners Association to register the group's interest and concern about the spread of ragwort and draw attention to the responsibility of landowners to control the plant. It was noted that Lorraine Barrett AM has also recently tabled two written Assembly questions on this issue.

APGAW Reception

The reception will be held in the Assembly's milling area between 12.30pm and 1.30pm on 27th of October. The RSPCA has offered to provide name badges for all the stakeholders in order to make them more visible and increase interaction with Assembly members. Invitations will also be sent out to AMs. The Chair expressed her preference for a display board to be filled with stakeholder posters/leaflets. Claire Lawson, RSPCA will co-ordinate the collation of the posters and kindly requested prompt submission as they will need to be vetted by Assembly officials. An e-mail will be sent to all members of APGAW to notify them of the submission deadline.

APGAW Conference

Chair, Lorraine Barrett AM called for suggested topics for the conference and offers of presentations. It is hoped that an update on the Animal Welfare Bill will be able to be provided at the conference. The Chair will seek the attendance of Rt Hon Alun Michael MP, DEFRA Minister for Rural Affairs. Claire Lawson, RSPCA will liaise with the Welsh Assembly Government's Animal Welfare Department to seek the attendance of a key official at the conference.

Circuses in Wales

A discussion was had on the circuses currently being held in Wales. Wendy Davies and Phillip Davies both attended circuses recently in Carmarthen and Aberystwyth and were pleased to report good animal welfare conditions at both sites. Claire Lawson, RSPCA noted that concerns arise for circus animals during cold, winter weather. Lorraine Barrett AM stated that the welfare of circus animals was the prime concern and added that it was for individuals to choose whether they attend such circuses.

Dates for the Diary

APGAW Conference: 27 July, APGAW Reception: 27 October, APGAW Meeting: 7 December

Rhian Jones and Dylan Bowen 30.06.04