

specific breed, and to provide advice on the priorities for research and development in this area". What makes the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Bateson report more likely than is sometimes the case, is that the Bateson inquiry was commissioned by The Kennel Club itself, along with the UK charity, Dogs Trust.

The findings and views in the report are based on the responses received to an initial call for evidence in February 2009 and subsequent interviews that took place with a range of interested individuals and organisations that included politicians, civil and public servants, scientists, veterinary surgeons, dog breeders, and representatives of animal care charities.

The report starts with chapters considering issues surrounding the domestication of the dog, assessment of animal welfare and genetics and inbreeding before detailing the welfare costs of dog breeding and making recommendations as to the way forward. In the latter sections, Bateson is keen to acknowledge the work that has taken place to address issues of dog breeding. Examples include the work carried out in gathering data on the range and prevalence of different inherited diseases in breeds by the Royal Veterinary College, The Kennel Club's work to educate and better train judges to recognise and reward good health and fitness of dogs to behave normally, its collaboration with the Animal Health Trust to develop a Mate Select Facility by which breeders can find the most appropriate mate for a dam and its Accredited Breeders Scheme which seeks to encourage the breeding of healthy puppies. However, even when doing so, he also highlights where improvements must occur. For example, he calls for greater public funding for research into companion animals and their health and welfare and to support the gathering of information on disease prevalence from a broad spectrum of veterinary surgeries, university veterinary hospitals and other major clinical centres. Similarly, he feels that the KC Accredited Breeders Scheme does not yet fully deliver on its assurance of good welfare standards for both parents and litters and lists 10 conditions which he sees must be met as a minimum for any such scheme to be judged as adequate. These include that all pre-mating tests for inherited disease appropriate to the breed or breeds are undertaken on both parents, that no mating takes place if the tests indicate that it would be inadvisable because it is likely to produce welfare problems in the offspring and/or is inadvisable in the context of a relevant breeding strategy; that every puppy is identified by microchip prior to sale and that all pre-sale tests on the puppy, which are appropriate to the breed, have been carried out. Whilst Bateson expresses the hope that The Kennel Club will be able to ensure that these and the other conditions become part of their Accredited Breeders Scheme, he warns that if intransigence on the part of breeders means they are not, that a new scheme incorporating these should be implemented through the Advisory Council on Dog Breeding. He also calls for a revision of Breed Standards to encourage the selection for morphologies that will improve the welfare status of breeds.

It is not only The Kennel Club and breeders that come in for critical attention. Bateson also focuses on veterinary surgeons, the public and existing legislation and calls for action here too. He identifies the dilemma that faces vets who derive income from treating health problems caused by heritable conditions and whose duty is also to advise against the breeding of increased numbers of dogs with these conditions. He encourages vets to become more active in the screening of dogs and in the collection of anonymised data on the prevalence of heritable conditions from veterinary surgeries and to become more involved in enforcement of dog breeding and sales legislation. He calls for the public to give more thought to the acquisition of a dog and be more selective in who they purchase it from and the questions they ask whilst doing so. Better education of the public is identified as necessary for these goals to be achieved. Finally, he notes that a national system of microchipping all dogs would assist Local Authorities (LA) with the enforcement of existing legislation. He indicates that this, along with a nationwide list of all LA-registered dog breeders, would allow data to be gathered on the number of puppies bred and sold each year and would make it much easier to trace animals back to the owner and breeder.

The Kennel Club was swift to respond to the Bateson report, broadly welcoming it and its recommendations and pointing to all the ways it is and/or intends to meet these (<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/2896/23/5/3>). As part of these, it indicates that it will now arrange a meeting with all relevant parties to discuss the detail of Professor Bateson's report along with the issues raised in the APGAW and RSPCA reports into dog breeding. In addition, it has announced the formation of a new Dog Health Group to replace the former KC Breed Health and Welfare Strategy Group. This new group has a broader remit and additional independent experts, including canine and human geneticists, veterinary surgeons and an epidemiologist and is clearly an attempt to counter the need for an independent Advisory Council set up along the lines recommended by Bateson.

NB: The Kennel Club response to the APGAW report can be found at: <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/2768/23/5/3>.

Independent Inquiry into Dog Breeding (January 2010). P Bateson, University of Cambridge. A4, 69 pages. Available to be downloaded from <http://www.dogbreedinginquiry.com>

S Wickens

UFAW

Whither the strategy for animal health and welfare in England? The parting thoughts of the England Implementation Group

This third and, with its dissolution, final report of the England Implementation Group (EIG) reviews the progress that has been made in the five years since the publication in 2004 of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain (AHWS) and the challenges that remain. The report acknowledges that "There are few good indicators of what

is happening to disease and welfare so much of this report reflects developments in process and partnership working, and attitudes and initiatives". As such, "It is an opinion piece....." that reflects the views of the members of the EIG. It considers a range of areas, including exotic and endemic disease, animal welfare, biosecurity and farm health planning, sectoral approaches to AHWS delivery, veterinary services and surveillance and makes recommendations for each as to possible ways ahead. These are aimed predominantly at Defra.

The EIG was founded as an independent body tasked to drive forward delivery of the vision and strategic aims of the AHWS. With its demise, no group is currently tasked with monitoring, evaluating and challenging the industry and Defra on the implementation of the AHWS. In his 2008 review of the EIG, David Eves noted both that Defra lacked the capacity to maintain some of the valuable work of the EIG and needed "the reality checks that EIG can provide for progress with both the AHWS and new policy proposals, helped by the external stakeholder advice which the EIG can attract and refine". This report also expressed concern that in any interim between the dissolution of the EIG and the establishment of another body to take on this responsibility, such momentum and progress that the EIG had made risked being lost.

What of the report itself? As might be expected, the authors take the opportunity to highlight successes during the EIG's existence. They point to progress in contingency planning for exotic disease and outbreak management, with a greater focus on working in partnership through Defra-stakeholder Core Groups. They note that vets involved with farm practice have moved further to increasing specialisation and service delivery, in line with the 'prevention is better than cure' theme of the AHWS. Similarly, there has been progress through the risk-based approach to inspection and enforcement of animal health and welfare, and closer working between Local Authorities and Animal Health (previously the State Veterinary Service). EIG also highlights its role in raising the profile of disease surveillance, something it views as central to an ongoing measure of the success of disease control and the health status of the UK's animals. It also celebrates the establishment of livestock, equine and companion health and welfare councils (the 'sector councils') and the co-ordination in planning they bring.

Nonetheless, the list of concerns and recommendations is lengthy. For example, with respect to animal welfare, the EIG is concerned that there is less working in partnership on animal welfare issues than on animal health, so that whilst good concepts are developed there is little support for their implementation. As a matter of urgency, it recommends that Defra should revisit the commitments made in its 2007 Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy and facilitate development of an AWDS Action Plan. The EIG sees this plan as being a

living document to be developed in collaboration with the sector councils, such as the Farm and Companion Animal Welfare Councils, in which specific actions for different stakeholders are identified and timescales for achievement set. As part of this, they also call for Defra to help establish effective working groups for each of the main groups of kept animals, which could develop welfare codes for each, based on welfare science and recognised best practice.

Similarly, they call for Defra to increasingly consult with such sector councils, so that these have some real input into policy development. Some have established priorities for action but for these to be implemented effectively EIG sees that there needs to be greater engagement with them from Defra.

The benefit that could be brought through Defra working more closely with the livestock sector, to improve evaluation and co-ordination of disease surveillance and thus the production of a more coherent picture of all types of disease incursion, is also identified. In addition, the report points out that Animal Health's surveillance activities should extend sufficiently to provide benchmarks on key health and welfare conditions, essential if any meaningful indicators of progress are to be established.

The report finishes by the EIG laying out its vision for the future and the role and remit it would like for the body that will take over delivery of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. This includes that the new body be fully independent and have real authority and clear powers, taking on the responsibility of Ministers for decision-making at a senior level. The remit of the Board must be unambiguous and that responsibility for welfare aspects that are associated with health/disease control should rest with the new body and that it must be careful not to neglect animal welfare issues beyond the farm. The new body must engage with stakeholders and look to develop new funding mechanisms to ensure that the cost of implementing change is equitably shared.

Defra has indicated that it intends that the new group, the Responsibility and Cost Sharing (RCS) body, will take on responsibility for the delivery of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. Whilst it remains unclear at this stage how many of the EIG concerns the RCS will address, Defra has recently published a draft Animal Health Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny "to help implement its plans for responsibility and cost sharing to deliver improved animal health and welfare in England", which should help clarify matters.

Third and Final Report on Progress and Challenges in Delivering the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy in England (January 2010). England Implementation Group (EIG). A4, 24 pages, Defra, UK. Report available for download from: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/policy/animalhealth/eig/pdf/eig-progress-report110110.pdf>

S Wickens
UFAW