

## Notes on the NAWAC meeting 22 May 2019

I attended and presented to the NAWAC group yesterday. Pat Dance also attended with me as a representative for Pedigree DogsNZ.

### DogsNZ

Steven Thomson and Becky Murphy attended for DogsNZ and presented first.

The DogsNZ presentation concentrated on matters intended to respond to the NAWA Opinion on Selective Breeding. I made a few notes:

- a. The Brachycephalic Working Group has been extended to include more brachycephalic breeds, 8 in total.
- b. DogsNZ are developing a Best Dog education framework for Judges and engaging with the NZ Judges to ensure they can assess and identify issues with breathing, eyes, diameter (weight), other exaggerated traits and gait.
- c. The DogsNZ Code of Conduct had been established and was mandatory with penalties and fines for noncompliance. There were however options for seeking exemptions for all requirements bar the requirement that a bitch have only 6 litters in her lifetime.
- d. The Bulldog Standard – has been reviewed by the Canine Health and Welfare Committee and recommendations have been made to change to either the FCI or the revised UK standard. The clubs have been given the chance to vote on one or the other. The standard will be changed to one of the options by August 2019.
- e. DogsNZ is working with Massey University which will be providing the BOAS chamber for use both at the university and at shows.
- f. The development of Litter Registration Limitations (**LRL**) with Labrador and Rottweiler Clubs and Breeders having voted in support and the German Shepherd and Pug Clubs and breeders to come. The Labrador LRL had shown significant success with the removal of DNA based issues. LRL's once in place were mandatory and if breeders did not comply their litters would not be registered and they could leave DogsNZ. This ensures that DogsNZ can have control and ensure healthy dogs are registered through the registry.
- g. The concept of Fit for Function – Fit for Life has been developed.
- h. A guideline for interpreting breed standards has been developed.

Feedback from NAWAC to the DogsNZ presentation was supportive noting that much had been done to respond to their opinion, more than other groups.

Questions raised were:

- a. What was the percentage of dog breeders/owners that DogsNZ had an influence over?  
DogsNZ Answer: 15% of breeders nationally are registered members of DogsNZ
- b. What is DogsNZ planning to do about the ones they don't have influence over?  
DogsNZ Answer: Don't know.

At the moment we are in the pedigree business.

Pats Answer: Pedigree DogsNZ is engaged and talking to breeders and the public alike at pet expos and on dog walks. They have many educational resources about owning and buying healthy dogs and registering with DogsNZ that they hand out.

- c. Follow up question: What about the cross-breed register that DogsNZ has?

DogsNZ Answer: That is available to cross bred dogs and is an option for registration with the incumbent obligations under the DogsNZ rules and regulations applying to both registered pedigree and crossbred dogs.

- d. Had DogsNZ seen the HUHANZ petition and media articles about puppy farms?

DogsNZ Answer: No (Information to be provided to DogsNZ)

My Answer: I had seen the HUHANZ petition and the proposal to register breeders. I noted that there was a registry for breeders through DogsNZ and that registered breeders were regulated through the DogsNZ Rules and Regulations. It was accessible and clear.

### **Bulldog Club Taskforce**

I had a short time to present so I spoke briefly and invited questions for Pat as a representative of Pedigree Dogs NZ and a pedigree breeder and I. In addition, I provided handouts of the full presentation and supporting documents.

I concentrated on key points:

1. The emphasis of the Clubs has been advocacy and education. To this end they have:
  - a. joined as Clubs to work collaboratively for the betterment of our breeds. This includes a common code of conduct between all the Clubs. While reflecting the points in the DogsNZ Code of Conduct there are other matters that are specific to our breeds that we would also like to include.
  - b. engaged and consulted with Club members and breeders on key issues this includes the breed standards. The British Bulldog Breed Standard is currently being consulted on.
  - c. worked with breeders and vets to develop a health scheme for each of our breeds and to improve the overall health of our dogs.
  - d. developed resources to help breeders and potential pet owners with key issues such as:
    - a. what a responsible breeder is and the questions to ask when considering whether a bulldog or Frenchie is the right breed for you and who you want to buy one from;
    - b. what should be in information packs including health and helpful information for new owners; and
    - c. template contracts that breeders can use.
  - e. engaged with the public at dog shows, expos, pet walks and on social media.
  - f. advocated and engaged with key stakeholders including yourselves, officials and the minister, trademe and insurance companies to build relationships and an understanding of the work we are doing and to understand the issues.

I also commented on key issues for our clubs and the issues raised by HUHANZ and the SPCA in the media recently:

1. Bulldog Breed Standard:

The proposed changes are currently being consulted on by the Clubs with their members. While I don't want to presume what their views will be. I think the issues we face cannot be put down to a breed standard alone. It is subjective and therefore subject to interpretation.

DogsNZ has developed language which will help with the interpretation of breed standards as a whole. Our Breed Standards with the addition of guidelines to interpretation do not place aesthetics over health. Bulldogs and French Bulldogs bred to the Breed Standard can and are Healthy.

More widely it is the work on health testing and education that will improve Bulldog health. Speaking to other health co Ordinator's in the UK they have said that changes to breed standards in their countries have not had the effect that long-term health testing and developments in health have had. In the UK there has been over 10,000 bulldogs through the scheme that has to have an effect on the breeds health overall.

## 2. Responsible Breeders:

The Clubs recognise that there are concerns and we share them when we see articles about puppy mills and pet stores. The clubs are responding to these issues with a range of tools and will continue to do so.

We have been:

- Developing educational resources such as what responsible breeders look like and the questions the public should ask when considering buying from a breeder.
- Health testing certificates that breeders can show and advertise to confirm they have met testing requirements.
- Information packs for pet owners and clear concise contracts focussed on welfare and not just payment.
- A common code of conduct including common expectations of care and breeding that the Clubs and responsible breeders as a whole can promote.

Our resources and messages on responsible breeders and breeding are strongly promoted on social media and in large groups where potential pet owners are seeking information. Those messages have been out there among our groups for a few years now and we are seeing at least with our breeds more people asking questions when buying pups and dogs. We of course cannot force the public to take that advice but we can but try.

## 3. Breeder Registration and Regulation:

Responding to the question from the NAWAC member I said we have seen recent media statements including the HUHANZ petition and the interview with the SPCA a few weeks back. We understand the push to improve. However, breeders such as myself are already registered under DogsNZ. We are visible and accessible. We have rules we must comply with we are regulated.

Response was that it was good to see what we were doing for our breeds.

Questions raised were:

- a. There seems to be duplication between what the clubs are doing and what DogsNZ are doing?  
DogsNZ Answer: Our approach is to use the mandatory testing provided through the LRL. That testing is quality controlled with the NZVA and Massey and transparent. If breeders don't want to comply with an LRL on their breed, they can leave.

My Answer:

While there are common features in the health testing and code of conduct for example. The clubs are focussed on developing resources for their two breeds and promoting breed specific tools for our breeder members and our educational resources for the public.

On the issue of the club health testing schemes, our approach is to build support among our breeders for health testing. We do not want to make the entry so hard that we lose the

breeders who are new or aren't sure where to start with testing and who will benefit from our health schemes and resources. If we do that, we lose an opportunity to work with them to improve health.

Like the Rottweiler breeders we may with time and breeder and club support get to an LRL but for now we want to encourage breeders to join and test for the entire dog and not one issue alone.

We aren't doing things on our own either. We have and are working with a number of vets including those with significant brachy practices to develop our Health Schemes. We are focussed to ensure that testing is accessible to all our breeders on both islands. We also want to build public knowledge to ask for health tested dogs as well.